EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF THE CHIASE PROGRAM IN VIETNAM

Truong Chi Trung

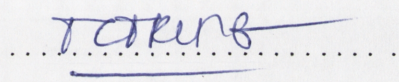
A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of

The Australian National University

March 2010

Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own original work carried out as a PhD student at the Australian National University from July 2005 to December 2008.



Truong Chi Trung

March 2010

Acknowledgement

At the completion of this thesis, I am happy to express my gratitude to a number of people and institutions. First of all, I would like to acknowledge my deepest sense of gratitude to Dr. Patrick Kilby, whose contribution was essential to the completion of this thesis. His theoretical guidance, critical comments and constructive suggestions were of immense help in giving me direction and focus while working on my thesis. For his constant encouragements and moral supports from the beginning to the end of this study, I would always be grateful.

I am also deeply grateful to Prof. Ben Kerkvliet, member of my supervisory panel, for his critical comments and helpful suggestions throughout different stages of the study. My profound gratitude is also extended to Dr. Sharon Bessell, member of my supervisory panel, whose invaluable comments and suggestions are very important to the completion of this thesis. Without the help of Prof. Ben Kerkvliet and Dr. Sharon Bessell, this thesis would not have been in its present form.

This study would have been inconceivable without the contribution of the key informants and respondents in Gio Linh district in Vietnam who spent their precious time to talk to me. For these hundreds of people who sit with me and opened their minds to me about their lives, I am deeply acknowledged. I am also thankful to staff of the Chiase program, particularly, Mr. Hoang Van Suu, Mr. Duong Dinh Dung, Mr. Vo Phuc Thinh, Ms. Nguyen Thi Le Hang, Mr. Tran Van Khoa, for various sources of support.

I am deeply grateful to the Ford Foundation International Fellowship Program for generously providing me a scholarship to pursue my PhD study in the Australian National University. A special thank is also extended to the Faculty of Art, Australian National University for ongoing support, without which I would not have been able to complete this thesis. I would also appreciate the leaders of the Quang Tri People's Committee who kindly allowed me to take a study leave to the ANU.

I am also grateful to Dr. Soparth Pongquan and Prof. Jayant Kumar Routray, my teachers at Asian Institute of Technology. Their endless encouragement and inspiration play a key role in the accomplishment of this thesis.

I would like to thank all staff members of the School of Anthropology & Archaeology (ANU) for creating a good academic and social environment and providing me great facilities for my research. In particular, I want to say many thanks to Prof. Nic Peterson, Dr. Patrick Guinness, Ms. Liz Walters, Ms. Sue Frazer, Ms. Christine Dwyer, and Mr. David Mc Gregory for various types of support extended to me.

A heart-felt thank is given to Ms. Minh Kauffman, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh, Ms. Nguyen Thi Xuan Huong, Mr. Loren Jutzi (The Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam) for providing me a wide range of supports throughout the course of my study. I am also thankful to Ms. Billie Headon, Ms. Maurette MacLeod, and Ms. Le Thi Ngan (The Crawford School for Economics and Government - ANU) for profound interest and moral supports from the beginning to the end of my study in the ANU.

I am also thankful to Dr. Jeff Wood for his precious advices on the statistical analysis of my thesis. My sincere appreciation also goes to Dr. Gail Craswell and Ms. Judy Bell for their reading and commenting on the writing of this thesis.

My gratitude is also extended to many friends, especially, Mr. Doan Dung, Ms. Le Thi Thuc, Ms. Tran Minh Hang, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh and Mr. Khalid Chauhan, who offered various helps during my study in the ANU.

Last but not least, I am extremely grateful to my beloved parents, my wife, my sister, and my brother. This thesis would not have been accomplished without their inspiration and encouragement.

Abstract

Community-Driven Development (CDD), which is characterized by the devolution of control over decision-making and resources to the local communities, is claimed as an effective mechanism for empowering the poor and has been widely promoted. At the same time, several studies find that CDD is incapable of challenging existing local institutions and social relations. The aim of this thesis is to examine the effectiveness of the CDD approach in empowering the poor, using an analysis of the Chiase program in the socio-political context of Vietnam, as a case study. The analysis involves three components: meaning of empowerment in the Chiase program, effectiveness of the program in transforming local power relations, and the factors affecting empowerment in the program.

This thesis has three groups of findings. First, it found that empowerment in the Chiase took many forms with different characteristics and consequences, which were all valued by the local people. It was also found that the elite tended to experience empowerment through gaining political power, the ability to influence the distribution of community resources, while the empowerment of the non-elite was mostly characterized by the increase in personal power, such as an improved awareness, confidence and basic skills. There were changes in power relations between local political patrons and the people, and between women and men, while the relationships between the economic 'better-offs' and the poor remained unchanged. The effects of collective processes in the Chiase program on empowerment were limited.

Second, it was found that that the Chiase program did transform the local power relations through improving people's participation in local decision-making and their networks with government officials and external agencies. The consequence of this

transformation was the increased relevance of community decision-making and improved people's access to available resources and support provided by the government. The transformative effect, however, was impeded by inappropriate poverty targeting schemes. Finally, downward accountability of the commune-echelon government, the extent one participated in local organizations and the amount of material support and training one received from the program were the factors that significantly affected people's empowerment.

The findings suggest that empowerment of the poor should go beyond the realm of political domination, to include broader processes involving both the improvements of access to assets and capabilities at individual level, as well as capacity to act at higher levels of decision-making. The CDD approach has a great potential to empower the poor, however, while changing the 'uppers-lowers' relationships between the local political patrons and the people, and women-men relationships are possible in this approach, reversing power relations between the elite and non-elite is much more difficult.

Key factors to be considered in the implementation of the CDD approach in Viet Nam include: the design of poverty targeting mechanisms, the downward accountability of the local government, the strength of local organizations, and the provision of material benefits and training. Careful attention to these factors would ensure more effective implementation of the CDD approach in Vietnam context, significantly contributing to improvement in the empowerment of the poor.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Boxes, Diagram, Maps and Appendices

Abbreviations

AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBOs	Community-Based Development Organization
CBD	Community-Based Development
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CDF	Commune Development Fund
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CPC	Commune People's Committee
CPMU	Commune Project Management Unit
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
DDF	District Development Fund
DPC	District People's Committee
DPMU	District Project Management Unit
FA	Farmers' Association
LDF	Local Development Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOLISA	Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
VDF	Village Development Fund
VA	Veterans' Association
VMG	Village management Group
VSG	Village Supervision Group
WU	Women's Union
YU	Youth Association.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Voicelessness and powerlessness are widely seen as important dimensions of poverty, and empowerment is becoming a key component of poverty reduction (Narayan *et al.*, 2000: 31). The emphasis on empowerment has led to increasing popularity of the Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach to poverty reduction. The CDD approach, which is characterized by devolution of control over decision-making and strengthening of community-based organizations, is increasingly being promoted by World Bank and other multi-lateral development banks (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 2; Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 6; Wassenich and Whiteside, 2004: 2). According to the proponents of the CDD approach, 'the speed and directness with which the CDD empowers the poor people is rarely matched by other institutional framework for poverty reduction' (Dongier *et al.*, 2001: 308). At the same time, some empirical studies find that Social Funds[1] – a branch of the CDD approach - is incapable of changing local institutions and social relations (Babajanian, 2005: 457; Rao and Ibanez, 2003: 33). These studies found that the Social Fund even strengthened and reinforced the existing positions and dominant roles of local leaders. In Vietnam, the CDD approach has also been recognized by the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) of the Vietnamese government, as the key mechanism for poverty reduction at the local level (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 62-

[1] Social Fund typically is a government agency that is set up as semi-independent institution reporting directly to the President or Prime Minister. Its role is to disburse grants directly to the communities in order to fund the construction of a public good, with the community contributing a small proportion of the costs (often 5-20 per cent), in cash, labor, or materials. The key idea behind the Social Fund is that people's participation mobilized for selecting and implementing projects will increase the relevance and sustainability of community works, the capacity for collective action of the communities, and the cohesion among community members (Rao and Ibanez, 2003: 4).

63).

The main focus of this thesis is the effectiveness of the CDD approach in empowering the poor in the socio-political context of Vietnam. Two related questions are examined: (1) How and to what extent the CDD approach empowers the poor; and (2) What are the factors affecting empowerment in this development approach. The analysis is facilitated through an examination of the Chiase poverty reduction program in Vietnam[2]. The Chiase program was initiated in November 2003, operated in three provinces of Quang Tri, Ha Giang and Yen Bai, and used a CDD approach, characterized by devolution of control to local community and people's participation in local decision-making(Chiase Program Document, 2003: 36). In many ways it can be seen as an experiment of the approach to poverty reduction at local level of the Vietnam CPRGS.

The first question on empowerment is inspired by the argument of the scholars at the World Bank that the CDD approach is an effective mechanism for empowering the poor, and can do it on a large scale (Dongier et al, 2001: 307-308). This thesis examines the effectiveness of the Chiase program in empowering the poor through two components of analysis: the meaning of empowerment which involves people's perception of empowerment as well as its implications for the change in power relations; and the effectiveness of the Chiase program in transforming local power relations which involves the performance of poverty targeting mechanisms and improvement in people's participation in local decision-making and social networks.

The second question explored in this thesis asks what are the factors affecting empowerment in the Chiase program. The examination is mainly undertaken through a quantitative logistic regression analysis of survey results of factors which may have some

[2] A detailed analysis of the Chiase program is presented in Chapter Four.

bearing on empowerment in this program, and supplemented by a qualitative analysis relying on people's perception of empowerment and an institutional analysis of democratic decentralization in this program. The aim of this thesis is to provide a critical evaluation of the empowering potential of the CDD programs in a context in which this approach is becoming increasingly popular in development practice, and to point out areas where improvement of the CDD programs in the socio-political context of Vietnam may be made. This chapter will now outline the key issues of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, and its rationale and limitations.

1.2. Research Issues

The language of empowerment has become popular in the development lexicon since the introduction of a new approach to development termed 'alternative development', 'people-centered development' or 'participatory development' (Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 2; Rahman, 1993: 206). The key issue of the new approach was that although physical development is important, it must be carried out in such way that the beneficiaries have both a central role in its implementation, and some control over it. There were two arguments being put forward: first, poverty is structural and has its roots in the economic and political system, and therefore it is essential to develop the abilities of the poor people to have a say in and have some influence on the forces which control their livelihoods if poverty is to be tackled. Second, development interventions have by-passed the majority of poor people, therefore poverty-targeted programs must be adjusted so that the previously neglected people have a chance to benefit from development initiatives (Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 2; Rahman, 1993: 206). In short, the people-centered approach saw the poverty reduction effort as a process that benefits the poor and marginalized people by giving them the power to control their own life.

Recently, empowerment has been increasingly used by development agencies,

including NGOs and international organizations, as a key strategy in poverty reduction. The popularity of the empowerment approach relies on the recognition that to make poverty reduction sustained, the involvement of the poor in the social, economic, and political spheres is essential. Recent literature on the nature of poverty largely sees it not only in terms of material deprivation but also as a disempowerment process. The 'Voices of the Poor' report of the World Bank and 'World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking poverty' establish that in different social, economic, cultural and political contexts, among important factors underlying the poor people's exclusion are voicelessness and powerlessness (Narayan *et al.*, 2000: 31; World Bank, 2001: 15). Similarly, Amartya Sen (1999) defines poverty in terms of capacity deprivation and lack of freedom to lead the life people value. The relationship between disempowerment and poverty is explained by the World Bank (2002: 10) as the poor 'are unable to influence and negotiate better terms for themselves with traders, financiers, government and civil society' (p.10). This 'lack of voice' severely affects the capacity of the poor to build assets and get out of poverty.

Nowadays, the debate is focusing less on whether empowerment should be the objective of development but more on the appropriate mechanisms that can effectively empower the powerless, and can do it at scale. The CDD, a development approach in which control over decision-making and resources is given to the communities, is widely claimed as an effective mechanism for the empowerment of the poor people and communities (Chebil and Haque, 2003: 120; Dongier et al, 2001: 307-308). This approach has become one of the fastest-growing approaches for channeling of development assistance among multilateral development banks and aid agencies since the mid 1990s (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 2; Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 1). A former World Bank president James Wolfensohn emphasized the CDD as a key approach that can be scaled up and leveraged to meet the

Millennium Development Goals (Wassenich and Whiteside, 2004: 1).

In Vietnam, since the 1990s, poverty and inequality have become central concerns of development partners in Vietnam including the government, International Organizations, and NGOs. In 2003, with the support of the World Bank and other international development agencies, the CPRGS was put forward in order to shape the framework for poverty reduction efforts in the country (Conway, 2004: vii). The CPRGS is a set of policies that center on four key approaches to poverty reduction:

- promoting a sustainable pro-poor economic growth;
- facilitating empowerment of the poor people by ensuring people's basic needs and promoting good governance through decentralization and people's participation;
- enhancing human capital and reduce inequality; and
- establishing 'social safety nets' for those marginal to or adversely affected by adjustment processes.

The CPRGS (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 62-63) strongly advocates a poverty reduction approach in which empowerment of the poor is facilitated by an increase of community's control over local development, and an enhancement of participatory decision-making and implementation of these efforts. Obviously, the CDD approach lies at the heart of empowering approach to poverty reduction of Vietnam CPRGS. The central role of the CDD approach in international development generally, as well as in poverty reduction in Vietnam particularly, shapes the issue of this study: the effectiveness of the CDD approach in empowering the poor people. In the next sections, key issues about empowerment and this development approach as an empowerment intermediary are

discussed.

1.2.1. Empowerment

Several points can be extracted from the literature on empowerment in development that are fundamental to the conceptualization of empowerment in this thesis. First, the concept of power is less about domination but '[is]...logically tied to that of action' (Giddens, 1979: 94). Power can be conceptualized in term of 'transformative capacity', or '...the capacity or likelihood of actors to achieve desired or intended outcomes' (Giddens, 1979: 88). The emphasis on the transformative nature of power suggests the close relationship between the concept of empowerment and that of agency. This relationship provides the ground on which the definition and measurement of empowerment in this thesis are based. Here, empowerment is defined in terms of change in agency, or in the other words, as the improvement in the range of choice and the ability to make choices (Kabeer, 1999: 436; Kilby, 2006a: 2). Second, empowerment is a multi-directional social process. Giddens (1979: 6) argues that the very presence of a social relationship implies that even the subordinates have some power over the other parties. Power lies in social relationship and is always two-way; therefore in a society, empowerment is multi-directional.

Third, empowerment of the poor is necessarily related to processes through which they were previously disempowered. The analysis of disempowerment can be based on the understanding of how power structures are constituted. Some theories of power highlight three dimensions of the constitution of power (Bachrach and Barantz, 1970: 18; Lukes, 1974: 17). The first version sees the power structure as 'a network of decision-making' through which the superiors make the subordinate to do what they would not otherwise have done. The second version regards the exercise of power as the establishing barriers

(political values and institutional practices) which prevent others voicing their interests. The third version explains that power is exercised where the interests of the dominant party are taken to be natural or "God-given" and no alternative to the status quo can be imagined. These versions of power show that power can be exercised not only as domination, but also as the confining of decision-making spaces. This point, therefore, facilitates the understanding of how and why disempowerment is experienced and what can be done to achieve empowerment. Fourth, empowerment has both cognitive and political components (Goetz, 2001: 35; Sen, 1997: 2) that are not mutually exclusive. The expanded sense of self-efficacy and awareness is a precondition for people to question and initiate action. Conversely, changes in opportunities to act, often caused by structural or collective processes, increase the likelihood that one can exercise agency successfully. Further, Gita Sen (1997: 2) contends that genuine empowerment includes both elements, and is less likely to be sustainable without either.

Fifth, empowerment has a collective dimension. According to Giddens (1979: 89), power can be exercised at the collective level. More specifically, power is 'a property of the social community', 'a network of decision-making' or 'an institutional phenomenon'. Power can be seen as a collective resource, such as a collectivity of support and an institutional framework to maximize the effectiveness of individual actions, as Giddens (1984: 16) stated:

> 'Power within social system, which enjoys some continuity over time and space, presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors and collectivities in contexts of social interaction'.

This relationship between individual power and collective or structural processes provides the theoretical basis for various forms of empowerment efforts. Riger (1993: 285, 290) argues, however, that there is a tension between individual empowerment and

community development. When empowered individuals act more autonomously, the sense of community is undermined. Therefore, the emphasis on personal agency and control may negatively affect community solidarity, which is crucial for the capacity of community to achieve its common goals. This raises the importance of balancing individual empowerment in community development.

Finally, as empowerment is basically related to changing power relations in favor of those who have little control over their own lives in the first place (Sen G.,1997: 2), therefore, the transformation in power relations between the poor and powerful elite is essential for the empowerment of the poor – the issue of concern in this thesis. While the evaluation of 'transformation' is controversial, one realistic approach to measure 'transformation' is to focus on the change in 'political capabilities' of the poor, which is defined as 'institutional and organizational resources' to support effective political action (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999: 6), or in other words, the ability to 'create new rules, transform social preferences, and secure new resources as they become available' (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999: 7).

1.2.2. Empowerment through the CDD Approach

Community-Driven Development (CDD) is basically a new participatory development model in which the control over decision making and resources is devolved to the local communities and its locally elected bodies. It is a sub-group of Community-based development (CBD) projects which is an umbrella term for projects that actively include beneficiaries in their design and implementation (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 1). The CDD is distinguished from other earlier generations of CBD projects in that it emphasizes the role of the local communities in driving the development process rather than being the passive beneficiaries. As the devolution of control may take multiple forms with different levels of

people's participation, the CDD represents a broad set of participatory initiatives. Therefore, the amount of power devolved, or in other words, the level of people's participation informs the nature of a CDD initiative. Based on the level of community control and the level of people's participation in stages of the project cycle, Tanaka *et al.* (2006: 7) propose five defining characteristics of a CDD initiative: community focus, participation in planning, participation in implementation, community control of resources, and Community-based monitoring and evaluation. These five characteristics show the continuum of the level of community participation in a CDD. Only the new generation of the CDD programs has all these characteristics while the earlier generations of the CDD may just have the first three characteristics (Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 7). The CDD approach is characterized by three underlying processes: poverty targeting, participatory decision-making, and community organizing (Dongier et al, 2001: 4-8) which significantly affect people's access to material benefits, political power and social capital.

Empowerment of the poor through the CDD approach can be characterized by the creation of their 'political capabilities' which is defined as the ability to 'create new rules, transform social preferences, as well as secure new resources as they become available' (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999: 7). All three underlying processes in the CDD have a significant bearing on the 'political capabilities' of the poor. While participatory decision-making and community organizing processes can directly affect people's political representation and social networks, poverty targeting can significantly influence people's motivation for participation and community cohesion (Dupar and Badenoch, 2002: 22; Osmani, 2000: 23). Therefore, to understand the empowerment impacts of the CDD approach, the analysis of all three above processes is essential. The next sections highlight the strengths and limitations of these processes in creating the 'political capabilities' of the

poor.

Poverty Targeting

Poverty targeting refers to the extent to which scarce resources provided by the donor or government, are targeted to the poorest group. Each targeting mechanism is characterized by two factors: the method of targeting and the intermediary agent who implements the targeting (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 378). In participatory development interventions, of which the CDD forms a part, the donor or government agencies work in partnership with the local communities to implement the targeting. The responsibility of setting the criteria by which eligibility and assistance level will be judged is to a certain extent devolved to the community agents. Complete devolution is not common and most participatory targeting mechanisms give local communities a varying level of discretion within a set of rules and regulations (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 381).

According to the proponents of the CDD (Chebil and Haque, 2003: 126; Dongier et al, 2001: 307), by mobilizing local knowledge through direct participation, this approach can effectively target the poorest and the most marginal groups. The key advantage of participatory targeting is that it can target the poor in the absence of reliable information to allow means testing (Dongier et al, 2001: 307) and reduces likelihood of the adverse selection problem (Chebil and Haque, 2003: 126). Better information also helps to enhance the enforcement, reduce administration costs, and increase benefits delivered to the poor (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 382). As economic security is essential for collective actions and the mobilization of the poor (Osmani, 2000: 23), the effective poverty targeting in the CDD can have significant impacts on their 'political capabilities'.

Although the benefit of using local knowledge in poverty targeting are clear, poverty targeting relying on local knowledge is vulnerable to a number of problems. First,

Bergeron *et al.* (1998: 1989-1901) found that local knowledge may be unreliable. Poverty rankings by local informants should be used with caution as there are many factors which may affect the reliability of this technique: training of informants, choice of ranking criteria, informant selection, and definition of target population. Second, the understanding of social justice and poverty reduction may vary among communities; and may be different from that of national welfare agencies (Chan *et al.*, 1992: 189; King, 1997: 361) . If the preference of local communities is not pro-poor, the public resource is less likely to reach the poor. Third, elite capture, which denotes the situations where decentralized power is used to influence political outcomes through manipulation of information and perceptions, or by limiting the voice of others, may significantly influence the effect of targeting mechanism. For instance, Galasso and Ravallion (2000: 25-26) find that the performance in targeting the poor of the communities significantly decreased when the village inequality increased. Finally, inappropriate design of participatory programs may create tensions between achieving poverty targeting and other objectives that may worsen targeting effect of the programs (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 388).

Community Organizing

Community organizing, characterized by the strengthening of Community-based organizations, can enhance people's networks and community social capital[3] (Dongier et al, 2001: 308). These improved networks and social capital are directly related to institutional and organizational resources supporting political and collective actions, or in other words, 'political capabilities' of the poor. Therefore, community organizing has a great potential to transform the existing power relations. However, the notion that the improved social capital through the CDD approach can create transformation in local power relations is challenged

[3] In this study, following Woolcock and Narayan (2000: 226) social capital is defined as the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively.

by both theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence.

Portes (1998: 15-18), Woolcock and Narayan (2000: 231) contends that social capital can be destructive as well as constructive, and identify a number of its negative consequences, including: the strong ties among group members can prevent the outsiders from access; the closed community, under certain circumstances, may prevent the success of business initiatives by their members; group participation necessarily creates demand for the conformity of the members, which results in a strong social control and restrictive personal freedom; and there are situations where group cohesion obstructs individual success and force the more ambitious to escape from it. Harriss (2001: 113-115) argues that the notion that the strengthening of the Community-based organization can improve social capital of the poor does not take into account the class differentiation and power relations, and Rao and Walton (2004: 16) point out that as social capital is characterized by the social ties that one can mobilize to gain material benefits, it can increase the inequality. This is because the elite may have better external and internal networks than the poor and may use these networks to reproduce unequal systems of domination. Empirical findings also support this point, for example, an evaluation of the World Bank Social Fund – a form of the CDD – found that this approach does not change the nature of the existing institutions and social relations, but rather it strengthened the positions and dominant roles of local leaders (Babajanian, 2005: 457). Similarly, the World Bank OED (2002: 43) found that Social Funds use rather than produce social capital, and the social networking skills developed through social funds tend to help the elite attract external resources, rather than empower the poor.

Participatory Decision-making

Participatory decision-making, an underlying process in the CDD approach, is

characterized by the incorporation of local knowledge into the decision making process, which controls the local development and resources. In principle, through the participatory decision making process, the local development is driven by the local needs and demands what can be seen as the exercise of 'voice' and 'choice'. Therefore, participatory decision-making can directly improve the control over resources of the poor, or in other words, their 'political capabilities' (Dongier et al, 2001: 308).

However, the mobilization of 'local knowledge' through participatory decision-making is problematic for a number of reasons. The key obstacles impeding participatory decision-making include: the dependence of the rural poor on those with power (Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 13), the lack of organizational skills (Korten, 1981a: 191), the high 'cost' of participation in terms of time or the conflicts arising from decision-making (Johnson, 2001: 525; Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 6; Moore and Putzel, 1999: 10), the heterogeneity of the community (Korten, 1981a: 193; Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 13), and how the agency is accountable in supporting participation (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 7). These obstacles can result in two important issues in participation: first, participatory decision-making can may be influenced and shaped by the local power relations. That is, since local communities are often not homogenous social and economic entities and given the various limitations of the poor and marginalized touched on above, it is likely that the better-off would dominate the local democratic decision making. In addition, the local planning process often requires several types of inputs - time, effort, technical, managerial and political skills - that the poor are less likely to be able to provide. This operational demand further makes the local decision-making, to a large extent, rely on and therefore, be controlled by the dominant group.

Second, the performance of participatory decision-making and the production of

'local knowledge' are strongly influenced by the pre-existing relationship between a development agency and the local communities. Patronage-type relationship between agency and communities may result in 'local knowledge' which is actually shaped by an outsider's agenda (Mosse, 2001: 32). Therefore, the commitment to people's participation of the development agency is essential for the creation of 'indigenous knowledge' rather than the knowledge shaped by planning context.

1.2.3. Factors Affecting Empowerment in the CDD Approach

There are a wide range of factors that can affect how the local people can be empowered in a CDD program. This study focuses on three groups of factors: the household endowment, the benefits provided by the CDD programs, and the downward accountability of the local government involved in the CDD approach as the facilitator of community development processes. Specifically, potential factors being examined in this study include: education level, wealth level, participation in local organizations, amount of material support received, number of training courses attended, and downward accountability of the commune-level government, the partner supporting local communities in the Chiase program.

Educational attainment may be an important determinant of the empowerment in the CDD approach since the level of education should give people the access to knowledge and basic skills which are essential for their performance in various domains of life. Theories of democratic decentralization – of which the CDD is a sub-group - suggests that the ability to access and understand 'information about laws, policies, and the rights to which one is entitled' is dependent on ability to read (Johnson, 2001: 525). Some studies of poverty in Vietnam also attribute the phenomenon to low education attainment (UNDP, 2001: 53-54; Vu, 2004: 230).

The level of wealth is important because it may be indicate access to physical assets which affect not only people income but also access to community decision-making. Relating to theories of agency, wealth level in part represents the agent's resources, which form the 'vehicle' or 'media' for the exercise of power (Giddens, 1979: 91). More specifically, control over land, assets, and capital features the economic resources of power (Uphoff, 2005: 225). Furthermore, at a practical level, a number of studies of Social Fund – a branch of CDD approach – found that the elite dominated the decision-making at local level (Babajanian, 2005: 457; Rao and Ibanez, 2003: 33).

The extent of participation in local organizations in part reflects the social networks which is important to economic development of a household (Kozen and Parker, 2000: 66; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 232). Further, group processes can provide the member with support, resources, and a sense of empowerment with the groups (Drury and Reicher, 1999: 383; Kroeker, 1996: 124). In the context of Vietnam's rural societies, impact of the local organizations may be even more important because they play a key role in facilitating the provision of government services to people. In addition, being members of local organizations should have positive impacts on people's social and political skills. Therefore, participation in local organization should have a significant bearing on empowerment.

Material support is one common type of individual-level benefit provided by the CDD programs. The important role of economic support in empowerment has been widely recognized (Osmani, 2000: 23; Vijalakshmi, 2002: 282). Material benefit was important because 'an economically insecure group of people can hardly be expected to exercise effective bargaining power against the powers-that-be' (Osmani, 2000: 23). Further, in the context of Vietnamese villages where the material deprivation is pervasive, material

support may be even more significant in influencing empowerment outcome.

As discussed above, empowerment involves both changes in cognitive processes, and control over resources (Sen G.,1997: 2). Therefore, training can be a potential determinant of empowerment in that it can raise awareness, confidence, and a sense of self-efficacy among the poor people. At a practical level, in poverty reduction programs, the training courses often focus on a number of poverty-related themes, such as production skills, health, and gender equality, therefore, it can be expected that the more training courses a respondent attends the higher awareness and confidence he/she has in dealing with issues in different life domains.

According to Goetz and Jenkins (2002: 5), accountability denotes a specific type of power: the capacity to demand someone to be answerable for past actions, and/or the capacity to impose a sanction for poor performance. Therefore, a lack of accountability – the inability to make someone accountable for their actions - is synonymous with the lack of power (Day and Klein, 1987: 21). This suggests that in a democratic system, downward accountability of the public body is closely related to the empowerment of the citizens. Empirical studies of decentralized systems find that the effectiveness of a decentralization system is in part determined by the accountability relations the local power holders have to the constituents (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 478; Blair, 2000: 27; Kilby, 2006b: 960). The above theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence together strongly support a correlation between empowerment outcome and downward accountability of the public body. The CDD approach is basically a democratic decentralization system which is characterized by the partnership between the local communities, who control the decision-making and resources for local development, and the local government who is responsible for creating facilitative environment, monitoring and facilitating the local development process.

Therefore, the downward accountability of the local government may be important to the empowerment effect of the CDD programs.

1.3. Research Questions and Scope of the Research

The objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Chiase program in empowering poor people, and to identify the measures to improve the performance of the program in this respect. This objective involves two broad questions: how and to what extent the Chiase program empowers poor people in the socio-political context of Vietnam; and, what are the factors affecting empowerment in this program. To explore these broad questions, three sub-questions are posed:

(1) What does empowerment mean to the people in the Chiase program?

(2) How effective is the Chiase program in transforming local power relations?

(3) What are the factors affecting empowerment in the Chiase program?

While the CDD approach involves different institutional arrangements, this study focuses on only those CDD programs relying on the partnership between the community and local government because of its popularity in development practice generally, and in Vietnam particularly. The analysis of the meaning of empowerment in the Chiase program was used to provide a direct subjective measurement of the empowerment phenomenon in the program and indicate its strengths and limitations in this respect. The transformation of local power relations is assessed through examining the change in the people's participation in local decision-making and social networks, while at the same time exploring the tensions arising from the poverty targeting policies and their effects on people's motivation for participation and community cohesion. The combination of these two sources of analysis allows a cross-validation of the issue of concern and provides a nuanced explanation of the empowerment of the poor in this program.

The analysis of factors affecting empowerment in this program examined six potential factors; these are: educational attainment, wealth level, extent of participation in local organizations, amount of material support received, number of training courses attended, and downward accountability of the commune-level government, which is the key partner responsible for facilitating community development activities in the Chiase program.

1.4. Rationale and Limitations

The rationale of this study is the persistence of poverty in developing countries in general and in Vietnam particularly; the importance of empowerment as a key dimension of poverty reduction; and thus to examine the CDD approach as an effective mechanism for empowering the poor. These three elements together form the significance of the potential contribution of this study.

The study has two key limitations. First, due to time and financial constraints, the study relies on data collected from one case CDD program. This limitation certainly affects the generalizability of the findings of this study. However, as the goal of this study is to examine the theoretical arguments about the CDD approach, this limitation does not seriously affect the validity of the study. According to De Vaus (2001), a study relying on a single case can be 'appropriate when we have a clear theory with well-formulated propositions and we have a single case that meets all the requirements of the theory' (p.227). Though the single case study is by no means statistically representative, its findings can be theoretically generalized to help 'refine, develop, and test theory' (De Vaus, 2001: 237). In this context, reliance on the Chiase program, which features a typical CDD program, is justified.

Second, as the survey of this study was carried out when the Chiase program was in

its fourth year of implementation, the duration of time might not be long enough for empowerment effects of the program to have matured. However, the design of this study has gone some way to remedying this problem. First, the study focuses on both people's self-evaluation of empowerment outcomes and factual data about program impacts in order to explore not only matured effects but also the subtle implications for people's empowerment. Second, the use of two sources of analysis also increases the reliability of findings.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter One identifies the key issues of empowerment, the CDD as an empowerment mechanism, the factors affecting empowerment, and sets out the scope, research questions, rationale and limitation of the study. Chapters Two and Three provide the theoretical background for the thesis. Chapter Two looks at the theories which informs empowerment and how it may be measured. Chapters Three examines the characteristics of the CDD and how it can be an empowering mechanism, and it relates the CDD approach to decentralization in order to highlight the importance of downward accountability in this development approach.

Chapter Four looks at Vietnam context with the emphases on four themes: poverty and inequality; current strategy for poverty reduction in Vietnam which involves the CDD; socio-economic and institutional context of the CDD approach in the country; and a profile of the Chiase program. Chapter Five presents the research design and methodology, including a description of the study area – Gio Linh district of Quang Tri province in Vietnam. Chapter Six presents the results of data analysis which include: meaning of empowerment in the Chiase program and implications for change in local power relations, effectiveness of this program in transforming local power relations, and factors affecting empowerment in this program.

Chapters Seven discuss the findings of the study in relation to the related theories presented in chapters Two and Three, and contextual issues in Chapter Four. Chapter Eight summarizes the research findings and highlights the recommendations for the design and practice of the CDD approach in Vietnam.

Chapter Two: Empowerment

2.1. Introduction

The term 'empowerment' is used to 'represent a wide range of concepts, and to describe a proliferation of outcomes' (Malhotra *et al.*, 2002: 4). It is used in different fields of social science, such as business management, education, public health, politics and international development, to the point the concept and its application seem to blur (Page and Czuba, 1999: 2; Rowland, 1995: 9). In the field of poverty alleviation and international development, empowerment is a central strategy pursued by many international development agencies (World Bank, 2002: 1). However, despite the central role of the term 'empowerment' in development today, its meaning varies among different social, cultural and political contexts. Some examples are self-strength, control, self-reliance, own choice, being capable of fighting for one's rights, independence, being free, and life of dignity in accordance with one's values (World Bank, 2002: 10). To some extent it has become a buzzword in development practice referring to activities and processes often unrelated to changes in power relations among various actors or groups in society (Cheater, 1999: 7; Page and Czuba, 1999: 1).

In order to avoid the generalized definition of the term empowerment, this thesis – following Kabeer (1999: 436) and Kilby (2006a: 2) - defines empowerment by relating it directly to the concept of 'agency': the expansion of an individual's choices and their ability to act on them. Therefore, by definition, the empowerment of an individual is inescapably tied to their status of disempowerment, and so refers to a process of change. Through empowerment processes, those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. This definition is important as it provides the basis for the measurement of empowerment in this study. The following sections examine three broad

issues: theories of empowerment, transformation of power relations, and the measurement of empowerment.

2.2. Theories of Empowerment

2.2.1. Conceptions of Empowerment

Although empowerment is often used with a diverse range of meanings, Mosedale (2005: 244) contends that, there are four aspects of empowerment which are generally accepted.

- First, to be empowered, one must be disempowered at least in certain aspects in the first place;
- Second, empowerment cannot be bestowed by an external actor; the most that development agencies can do is to facilitate people empowering themselves;
- Third, empowerment is about capacity to make decisions on matters which are important in one's life and capacity carry them out; and
- Finally, empowerment is an ongoing process rather than a product.

These four dimensions can be seen as defining features of the concept. As well as these four dimensions of empowerment, in development there are two broad views of empowerment: first empowerment is about changes in individual capacities primarily through cognitive changes; and second, empowerment is related to political issues and rights (Kilby, 2006a: 3). For those who see empowerment as about increasing capacity, then it is less related to the direct exercise of power (Korten, 1981b: 214; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988: 726). Empowerment is described as 'a construct that links individual strength and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to matters of social policy and social change' (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988: 726), or 'the

connection between a sense of personal competence, desire for, and a willingness to take action in public domain' (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988: 746). Similarly, Korten (1981b) stressed that helping the poor to develop the 'understanding of their needs' and 'the opportunities and constraints they face' is critical to people's self development (p.214). This view of empowerment eschews the notion of power relations and equality, and is based on the model of power which is termed 'power to', and is often explained by the metaphor of human development (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 8). It suggests that power can grow infinitely when we work at it, and the 'growth' of one person does not necessarily negatively affect another (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 8), and it is also closely related to the notion of human capability (Sen G., 1997: 3)

The second view of empowerment focuses on the changes in social relationship and the role of the individual in social relations, and by definition it is political (Kabeer, 1999: 436; Riger, 1993: 283). It is based on a power model described as 'power over' in which, power is treated as 'a property of a social community, a medium where community interest and class interest are realized' (Giddens, 1979: 89-92). In the other words, power is directly related to domination and is treated as a finite amount in a closed system, or in other words a zero-sum game, so that, if one party gains more power, other parties would gain less (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 9). In this empowerment framework, empowerment is more about changes in social, institutional relations and directly link to political issues, which can be in the realms of family , organization or community power structures (Kabeer, 1999: 436). It suggests that empowerment has a collective dimension.

These two views of empowerment can live together as empowerment has both cognitive and political components (Goetz, 2001: 35). Expanded awareness is a precondition for people to question and initiate action. Conversely, increase of awareness

without corresponding changes in opportunities to act is just a 'sense of empowerment' (Riger, 1993: 281). According to Gita Sen (1997: 2), increased self-confidence and a transformation of consciousness can enable one to overcome external barriers to access resources. On the other hand, control over resources and external world also gives one with an increase of awareness and confidence. Further, Gita Sen contends that genuine empowerment includes both elements, and is less likely to be sustainable without either. An improvement in the control of access to external resources without consciousness-raising can leave people 'without resilience, motivation and awareness to retain and build on that control', and the control is rarely secured. Conversely, programs that aim at raising consciousness but are unable to deliver more control over resources can lead to 'frustration and high dropout rates' (Sen G., 1997: 2). The next sections examine the notion of empowerment at individual level.

2.2.2. Individual Empowerment

Individual empowerment is generally defined as the development of understanding and influence over personal, economic, social, and political forces impacting people's life (Schulz *et al.*, 1995: 310). Individual empowerment is contextual; first is that it takes different forms for different people because individual characteristics influence the process and meaning of empowerment; second, individual empowerment varies based on contexts, as the environments where people live modify the form of empowerment; and finally, individual empowerment varies over time (Speer, 2000: 52). Further, according to Schulz and Israel (1991: 10), empowerment can be conceptualized as a multi-level construct and can occur at individual, organizational and community levels. At an individual level, empowerment involves the improvement of 'personal power', characterized by the development of basic skills and a sense of self-efficacy. At organizational level, empowerment involves the enhancement of 'social power' or the ability to influence others,

and at the community level, empowerment involves the increase of 'political power', which is characterized by the ability to influence the allocation of social and economic resources (Schulz and Israel, 1991: 10). These are by their nature related to power structures.

There are three ways through which power structures can be constituted: as 'a network of decision-making' through which the superiors made the subordinate to do what they would not otherwise have done; or it can be an 'institutional phenomenon' – where power is exercised by confining an individual's decision-making space (Bachrach and Barantz, 1970: 18)[4]; or power is exercised where the interests of dominant party are taken to be natural (or God-given), and thus, supports the status quo (Lukes, 1974: 17)[5]. These explanations of the constitution of power structure suggest various strategies through which empowerment can be achieved. The next section discusses a theoretical framework for empowerment, the relationship between empowerment and agency, and then the relationship between individual and collective empowerment

2.2.3. A Theoretical Framework for Empowerment

Giddens (1979) establishes a theoretical background for understanding empowerment and its relationships with collective and structural processes. He argues that power is 'logically tied to that of action' and can be 'understood as a transformative capacity' (p.88), and power is 'the capacity or likelihood of actors to achieve desired or intended outcomes' (p.88). As power is exercised, structured properties of social systems are drawn upon and at the same time reproduced through the activities of the participants in

---

[4] Bachrach and Barantz refer to power as the 'mobilization of bias' – the establishing barriers (political values and institutional practices) which prevent others voicing their interests. This results in 'non decision-making' on key issues.

[5] According to Lukes, power may be exercised more subtly through manipulation and involves confining the scope of decision-making to the 'relatively safe' issues, and power is essentially about influencing, shaping and determining the wants of another.

the system of interactions (p.88). In that sense, power has a transformative nature (p.88). Furthermore, power in social system can be treated as 'involving reproduced relations of autonomy and dependency in social interaction' (p.93). Power relationships are always two-way, even if the power of one actor in a social relation is minimal as compared to another (p.6). That means 'however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her certain amount of power over the other' (p.6). In the other words, the subordinates in power relationships are adept at mobilizing whatever resources they possess to increase their control over 'the conditions of reproduction of those social systems' (p.6). Therefore, power is multidirectional and lies in social relationships.

In addition, Giddens (1979) argues that power can be exercised at collective level, that is 'a property of the social community', 'a network of decision-making' or 'an institutional phenomenon' (p.89). Individuals can draw on the collective resources such as a collectivity of support and an institutional framework to maximize the effectiveness of their actions as Giddens (1984) states: 'Power within social system, which enjoy some continuity over time and space, presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors and collectivities in contexts of social interaction' (p.16). Finally is the concept of 'a duality of structure' in which a social system is a 'structured totality' and involves 'reproduced relations between actors and collectives' (Giddens, 1979: 64). Thus, social systems are constituted by regular social practices (Giddens, 1979: 65) and structure does not exist in time and space except in the moment social system is constituted. Structure, in this view, is about 'structured property' which can be understood as rules and resources, that are recursively implicated in the reproduction of social system, and is a mix of rules – the properties that govern transformation (Giddens, 1982: 35). One feature of the 'duality

of structure' is that power has two interrelated dimensions: 'capacity of an actor to achieve his or her will', and (2) 'a property of the collectivity' (Giddens, 1979: 69). That means power is concurrently the transformative capacity of actors or collectives, and at the same time, a structural resource of a community.

What emerge from the points made by Giddens is that power is a social resource with structural and collective aspects, lying in social relationships and being multi-directional, and is characterized by the capacity to achieve outcome – or in the other words, a transformation process. The next section establishes the relationship between concept of empowerment and that of agency.

2.245. Agency and Empowerment

Agency is conceptualized by Giddens (1979: 55) as a 'stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world', a 'continuous flow of conducts' and as such, a feature of being human. For Giddens (1984: 3): 'to be a human being is to be a purposive agent', who both has reason for her activities and is able to elaborate on them. Further, agency is also a 'continuous process by which action transforms both structures and individuals'(1984: 14), and so, an intervention. Agency refers to both the range of choices (Kabeer, 1999: 436) and ability to exercise them (Giddens, 1984: 9).

As the concept of power is characterized by a capacity to reach outcome (Giddens, 1979: 92) and a process of change by which 'those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability' (Kabeer, 1999: 437), it directly related to a transformative capacity of the human. Therefore, the concept of power is tied to that of agency. However, agency is more than a simple action or choice as (Kabeer, 1999: 438) explains:

> Agency is about more than observable action; it also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose which individual bring to their activity ... [agency] can take the form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. It can be exercised by individual as well as collectives (p.438).

Furthermore, it is not that all choices are equally relevant to the definition of power (Kabeer, 1999: 437). Some choices may have more significant impacts on people's lives than others. Therefore, it is necessary to make a distinction between strategic life choices, and second-order choices, where the former are those which are critical for people to live the life they want while the latter, though important to people's lives, do not constitute the defining characteristics of power.

Power – defined as the capability to reach outcome, is related to the access to and the performance in certain socio-political domains. Studying the empowerment of Adivasi women in India, Vijayalakshmi (2002) finds that power is in part determined by access to five domains: the household, local institutional structure, political community, broader economy, and civil society, and the ability to mobilize resources in these domains (p.271). Similarly, Jandhyala (1998) argues that power is related to access to 'new spaces' (p.205). This point is inline with Bachrach and Barantz (1970: 18) and Lukes (1974: 17) who see the exercise of power as defining or confining decision-making spaces. This view of power as access to and performance in decision-making spaces suggests the areas that empowerment programs can focus.

2.2.5. Collective Dimension of Empowerment

Though individual empowerment refers to an individual's ability to make life choices and is related to personal self-efficacy and competence, the construction of individual empowerment moves beyond personal change and is related to a critical understanding of social and political context and the increased skills for social change

(Schulz *et al.*, 1995: 310). Such critical understanding and skills can be effectively achieved through changes in structures and forms of interaction. Structures can shape individual resources, agency, and achievements, and thus, individual interest (Kabeer, 1999: 461). Therefore, individual empowerment may involve societal transformation by challenging powerful people and institutions either through confrontation or collaboration. Such processes can be facilitated by organizational changes (Kroeker, 1996: 124).

There is also an interrelationship between individual empowerment and collective empowerment which is defined as collective processes derived from psychological empowerment of individuals (Pilisuk *et al.*, 1996: 17-18; Rissel, 1994: 39). According to Pilisuk, when several members are psychologically empowered and share their empowering experiences, then a collective self-efficacy emerges (p.18). This means objectives which were previously seen beyond the power of individuals now may be seen within the collective grasp. Conversely, the collective processes can significantly affect individual empowerment. In the group, one gains voice, value and support (Kroeker, 1996: 124). The collective processes facilitate ones' access to social and economic resources and to arenas of decision-making (Schulz *et al.*, 1995: 310). In a nutshell, the collective processes, on the one hand, can provide members the organizational resources, such as the communication and ability to co-ordinate collective actions, and on the other hand, transform the self of the participants and increase their confidence (Drury and Reicher, 1999: 383).

The concept of 'critical consciousness' provides the basis for linking collective and individual empowerment (Schulz and Israel, 1991: 11). Critical consciousness has two key components: (1) the strengthening of feeling of identification with a group; and (2) a sense of self and collective efficacy. The second component involves both the belief that effective action is possible and the ability to make effective strategies for actions. Therefore, when

the level of critical consciousness is increased, the individual as well as group together develop the capacity to act more effectively. Thus, through the building of 'critical consciousness', both individual and communities develop their capacity to act to promote development.

Critical consciousness grows through an interactive process Freire's (1973: 18-19) which is characterized by two aspects. The first aspect of interactive process involves constructive dialogue with other in similar situations and the opportunity to connect personal experience with larger social processes. The second aspect involves the combination of action and reflection. As group members initiate action and discuss results with other members, insights gained promote the development of skills for effective action. This dialogic process of reflection and action is the basis of the individual and collective empowerment.

In community development, collective empowerment is often referred to as community empowerment, however, community empowerment is not the sum of individual empowerment. Community empowerment is defined as a mixture of a raised level of psychological empowerment among its members, a political action in which people actively participated, and a redistribution of decision-making authority favorable to this community (Rissel, 1994: 41). The distinction between individual and community empowerment is that community empowerment is comprised of three components: the subjective experience of psychological empowerment; the objective reality of structural changes for reallocating resources; and the existence of successful collective actions. Individual empowerment defined as perceived greater control over their lives can be experienced through participation in group processes in the absence of structural change.

Riger (1993: 285) does not support the notion of the interrelationship between

individual and collective empowerment, and argues that there is a tension between individual and collective action. For Riger, the situation that fosters collective values, say connectedness and consolidation, contrasts with those foster individual agency, masters and control which feature individual empowerment. Therefore, psychological empowerment may undermine community empowerment as the empowered individual acts more autonomously. She argues that: 'finding one's voice, controlling one's resources, becoming empowered may reduce the interdependence that produces a strong sense of community' (Riger, 1993: 289). That is empowering efforts which increase people's voice and control over their own lives may lead to conflict and reduce the interdependence and cohesion between people. The above tensions points to an important task of development agencies aiming at empowering the poor: to balance personal empowerment and the community solidarity. Riger (1993) argues that:

> Competition among groups for dominance and control without the simultaneous acknowledgement of common interests can lead to conflict ... One of the primary tasks ... is to articulate the relationship between empowerment and community (p.290).

2.2.6. Resources for Empowerment

As discussed previously, empowerment can be conceptualized as agency – the ability to reach outcomes. This conception suggests a concern about the factors that affect a person's chance of achieving his/her desired objectives. These factors are termed by Uphoff (2005: 225) as power bases or power resources which can be categorized into six types. First, economic resources refer to the control over land, labor, capital as well as the goods and services produced from them. This category includes not only economic form of production but also such goods and services as influence on public policies and access to higher education.

Further, social resources refer to social status, which is achieved based on the social

roles or meeting social values. These resources can provide the owner with personal satisfaction, esteem, respect, or deference. They can be drawn upon to achieve further goals such as getting public service or employment. In addition, political resources are basically a consequence of authority that entitle the employment of the resources of the state institutions possess to enforce decisions. The ability to influence the exercise of authority by voting or other means also can be seen as a political resource. Furthermore, informational resources are related to the knowledge which is productive and beneficial to the owner. Next is moral resource, which means the legitimacy accorded to the decision-makers, their roles, and the decisions they made. Finally, is physical resource, or the physical force that people can exert against people to compel their compliance (Uphoff,2005: 225).

2.2.7. Gender Dimension of Empowerment

While empowerment applies to all disadvantaged or socially excluded groups, women's empowerment, encompasses some unique additional elements (Malhotra and Schuler, 2006: 71-72): women are a cross-cutting category of individuals that overlaps with other disadvantaged subsets of society, such as the poor or ethnic minorities; household relations are the central locus of women's disempowerment in a way that is not the case for other disempowered groups, therefore, the policies or interventions aiming at gender equality must be cognizant of their household-level implications (p.71); and while empowerment in general requires institutional transformations, women's empowerment requires specific changes of those institutions supporting patriarchal structures (p.72).

A theoretical framework for analyzing women's empowerment is proposed by Deshmukh-Ranadive (2006: 109-113). In this framework, women's empowerment is characterized by the improvement of their position in domestic units, which is significantly

affected by the access to and control over key spaces within the domestic arena: physical, economic, socio-cultural, and political. There is a feedback loop between one's position in domestic hierarchy and access to these spaces, that is when a woman's position in domestic hierarchy changes (for instance, through marriage, birth of a child, or death of a family member), her access to spaces may increase or decrease, and conversely, new access to the above spaces can influence a woman's capacity to act and thus her position.

Each of these spaces can affect the empowerment of women in particular way. Physical space refers to women's access to and control of their houses, immovable property outside the home and place of work, and also includes personal mobility and control over their body and its reproductive, productive, and consumptive functions (Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2006: 110). Economic space is determined by the ownership of immovable and movable, access to both tangible and non-tangible asset, and income, which thereby can enhance a woman's economic independence (p.111). Socio-cultural space is closely related to a woman's position within kin-based hierarchies, which is influenced by a number of social and cultural factors: type of family (nuclear or extended), kinship structure (unilateral or bi-lineal), marital status, child bearing capacity, caste, class, religion, and ethnic origin (p.112). Finally, political space can be perceived at two levels: private political space refers to political situation within a domestic unit, which correlates to hierarchal allocations of authority and responsibility; and public political space relates to access and control of public offices and the participation in political processes (p.112).

However, expansion of the above spaces does not always result in empowerment. For example, increases of women's income through micro-credit projects in Bangladesh can lead to rising gender-related tensions (Goetz and Gupta, 1996: 61). Deshmukh-Ranadive (2006: 113) argues that the prerequisite for women's empowerment to take place

is an expansion of their cognitive space which can be achieved through two processes: to bring the women together in new settings, such as collectives organized around issues of women's concern; and to raise people's awareness of rights and duties both as citizen of civic society and members of families which mainly involve the knowledge about legal processes, human rights and entitlements.

In addition, Narayan *et al.* (2000: 205) highlight a common problem associated with the approach to women's empowerment of development agencies, that is the emphasis on 'women in development' rather than developing approaches to both poor men and women, and propose a women's empowerment strategy which targets both men and women. As women's and men's well-beings are intertwined, to help women, it is also critical to understand men's role and reach men. Thus, women's empowerment efforts must address two key issues: greater access to economic opportunities should be provided to both men and women; and awareness of both men and women about their worth of human beings should be improved (Narayan *et al.*, 2000: 205). At practical level, gender equality must be reflected in 'institutional goals, designs, incentives, and criteria of success that are monitored and evaluated' in poverty reduction programs; and discussion of gender issues must include both men and women to increase the probability of less traumatic transition toward gender equity.

2.2.8. Empowerment of the Poor

Empowerment, first and foremost, is basically about changing power relations in favor of those who previously exercise little power over their own lives (Sen G.,1997: 2). Therefore empowerment of the poor must be characterized by the transformation in power relations between the poor people and powerful actors. According to Chambers (1995), a human society can been thought of as patterned into hierarchical relationships, many of

which are vertical, between 'uppers' and 'lowers'. Therefore, individuals are multiple uppers or multiple lowers, and one person can be an upper in one context and a lower in another (p.33). The poor, while making a living within existing unequal economic and political relationships, are engaged in two upper-lower relations: with the rich and the political patrons. Therefore, for Chambers, the empowerment of the poor involves the changes in these two power relationships (Chambers, 1995: 42).

Though being central to discourses on participatory development, the basis upon which evaluation of 'transformation' can be done is often overlooked. One realistic approach to assess the transformation in power relations, or empowerment of the poor, is to focus on participation's political impacts, that is, as put forward by Whitehead and Gray-Molina (1999: 6), the change in 'political capabilities' of the poor. In line with Whitehead and Gray-Molina, Moore and Putzen (1999: 8-10) also emphasize the importance of political mobilization in poverty reduction. They argue that important criteria for the success of development programs are the degree to which they contribute to the mobilization and sustained political action of the poor and

> 'it is useful to think of empowerment in terms of increasing the political capabilities of the poor ... It is the political capabilities of the poor that will determine whether they can employ social capital ... constructively or create social capital where is lacking' (p.8)

'Political capabilities' is broadly regarded as 'institutional and organizational resources as well as the collective ideas available to support effective political action'. Critically, political capabilities are defined as the ability to 'create new rules, transform social preferences, as well as secure new resources as they become available' (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999: 6-7). Therefore, building 'political capabilities' for the poor is about enhancing personal political capabilities, capacity for community organization,

confidence and recognition of dignity as well as the distribution of material resources (p.6).

2.3. Measurement of Empowerment

In this study, empowerment is basically measured in terms of the change in agency which is defined as the expansion in the range of choices and capacity to make them. In development, agency is often measured through the roles individuals play in relation to specific decisions (Kabeer, 1999: 445). However, the measurement of agency on the basis of the ability to make choice is problematic for a number of reasons. The first is that choices are not equally important to people (Kabeer, 1999: 437); that is distinction can be made between strategic life choices and what can be called second-order choices, but it is difficult to make such a distinction through objective assessment. Then there is the issue of the inequality in people's capacity to make choices, and the difference in the choices they make (Kabeer, 1999: 439), for instance, while participation in public meeting is often seen as an indicator of empowerment, one may opt out just because the issues being decided at that meeting are not of his/her interest. This is important because it is unlikely that all members of a society give equal value for a wide range of actions.

Kabeer (1999: 447-448) also highlights a number of problems associated with measuring agency: developing common indicators across different social situations, and the subtlety of personal choice, touched on above. Indicators of agency are often context specific, and they are related to strategic life choices that have been denied in the past. For example, a poor rural woman may see the change in her agency as being able to equally discuss with her husband about household issues while another poor man may describe his improved agency as being able to discuss community decisions. But the context-specific measurements of agency are not comparable across social situations as these indicators vary considerably among socio-cultural situations. Also, changes are often subtle and can occur in the informal rather than the formal domain. Therefore, empirical studies may fail to

capture this subtlety in which women are: 'opting for private forms of empowerment, which retain intact the public image, and honor, of the traditional decision-maker but which nevertheless increase women's 'backstage influence' in decision-making processes' (Kabeer, 1999: 448). One way to overcome this problem is to let people self identify the important changes that have occurred in their lives as a result of what may be seen as an empowerment intervention (Murthi, 2001: 350). However, one problem still exists as to evaluate marginal change in empowerment, people's responses need to be assessed according to a set of normative judgments developed by the researchers, other than that of the respondents (Kabeer, 1999: 458). For example, researchers may see participation in community decision-making as an indication of a higher level of empowerment than say making decision about domestic issues, while the local people may see the priority as being the other way round.

A number of researchers have attempted to deal with this challenge in different ways. Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991: 191) developed a framework of 'socio-political control' in order to break down the concept of agency into five components: policy control; leadership; a sense of community belonging; a sense of well-being; and, participation and decision-making. Agency is then measured by the changes in these five components. Naved (1994: 155) used self-identified indicators to measure agency in her study in Bangladesh, where she sought the changes that had occurred to women in their lives, which were then used as indicators of expanded choice and action. Broadly, the indicators include: increased mobility, the use of resources, and participation in public life. Similarly, Kilby (2006a: 9) also used self-identified indicators to measure women's empowerment through NGOs in India. The changes are categorized as: autonomy of action, dealing with officials, change in family decision making, participation in village political life, and advocacy on social issues.

The discussion shows that it may be difficult to validly measure empowerment through pre-defined proxy indicators, and Gita Sen (1997: 18) contends that in evaluating empowerment effect, qualitative measures must be used as what is being measured is qualitative by its very nature, and therefore, the evaluation method should be based on the response and feedback of the concerned community (p.18). Some studies used open-ended questions and let the respondents identifying the important changes that have occurred in their lives (Kilby, 2006a: 9; Naved, 1994: 155). In this way the respondents are given the chance to make their own judgment relating to the important changes they experienced.

This study, whose main concern was to compare the empowerment impacts between the elite and non-elite groups in the Chiase program, focused on the likelihood a person was empowered, rather than the marginal change of power. In other words, the study looked at whether a person is empowered rather than how much she is empowered and thus, empowerment was measured at categorical level. Recognizing the inherent difficulty in measuring empowerment, following Naved (1994: 155) and Kilby (2006a: 9), this study relies on subjective measurement by the respondents of empowerment outcomes. This strategy of measurement overcame the problem in dealing with different contexts. That is, while there may be different indicators of expanded choices across cultures and communities, as this study looked at the change in indicators, the result is still comparable across communities in a local area.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the concept of empowerment and the transformation of power relations which form a key part of this thesis. From the discussion, a number of theoretical points have emerged. First, power can be characterized by agency – a range of choice and ability to make choice, which is also related to access to and performance in domains of life which are previously denied.

Second, power has a collective dimension and there is an interrelationship between individual and collective empowerment. Empowerment begins at individual level and involves increased self-esteem and self-efficacy. When several members are psychologically empowered and share their empowering experiences, then a collective self-efficacy emerges and greater participation in community action is achieved. Conversely, collective power is a collective resource which members of group can call upon. It can effectively empower the members by giving them voices and support as well as a sense of power. However, the emphasis on personal agency and control may negatively affect community solidarity, and so raises an important question for programs aiming as empowering the poor and marginalized, that is how personal empowerment and community cohesion should be balanced. Third, empowerment of the poor must be characterized by the transformation in existing power relations which can be measured in terms of their 'political capabilities'. This point is important as it provides the basis for the analysis of empowerment of the poor in this study.

Finally, this chapter has looked at how the change in agency is used to measure empowerment in this thesis and the issues involved. The key to this approach is to let the respondents identify the changes in their agency – change in ability to make decisions which are important to their lives. Base on the respondent's self-evaluation, empowerment is measured at categorical level, that is, whether people experience empowerment. This is further elaborated more detail in Chapter Five dealing with the methodology of this study. The next chapter looks at the conceptualization of the CDD approach, its typical processes and dynamics.

Chapter Three: Community-Driven Development as an Empowerment Mechanism

3.1. Introduction

Community-Driven Development (CDD) has emerged as one of the fastest-growing approach for channeling of development assistance at local level among multilateral development banks since mid 1990s (Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 1). While the World Bank funded 192 the CDD projects in the period 1989 – 2003, the number of the CDD projects launched by the Bank in only 2005 grew up to 120 (Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 7). According to Mansuri and Rao (2004: 2), the World Bank's lending for the CDD projects and their enabling environment has risen from $3 billion in 1996 to $7 billion in 2003. Further, the CDD is claimed by the former World Bank president James Wolfensohn as a key approach to meet the Millennium Development Goals (Wassenich and Whiteside, 2004: 2). The approach is widely advocated as an effective mechanism for tackling poverty with a range of advantages: complement market and public sector activities, enhance sustainability, make development more responsive to demand, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of poverty reduction, build positive social capital and increase 'voice' of the local poor people (Dongier et al, 2001: 304). As empowerment is increasing seen as a key dimension of poverty reduction, the empowerment of the poor through this development approach is of importance to the development organizations.

This chapter aims to provide the theoretical background for the analysis of the empowerment of the poor in the CDD approach. The first part examines the conceptualization of the CDD with three main concerns: the defining features of CDD, underlying processes, and the institutional arrangements of this approach. The second part focuses on the strengths and limitations of the CDD approach in empowering the poor people. The final section discusses the nature of the CDD as a decentralization system, and

a factor that is likely affect the effectiveness of the CDD approach - downward accountability of the local government. A framework for analyzing decentralization systems is also introduced to provide a tool for the analysis of institutional setting of the CDD program under study.

3.2. Conceptualization of the CDD Approach

The idea of self-reliance and treating the target groups as the masters of their own development was introduced in participatory development or people-centered development approach in the 1970s (Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 3). However, until the 1980s and 1990s, when the combination of the failures of both market and government in poverty reduction, the recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, and the contextual variability of grassroots-level realities proved that traditional state-led, top-down strategies would not be effective for tackling poverty. This provided the impetus for participatory development in development practice became a dominant idea (Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 5). Community-based development (CBD) and Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects were then adopted widely in development practice (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 1). CBD refers to the initiatives that actively include beneficiaries in their design and implementation, and the CDD refers to CBD projects in which local communities have direct control over decision-making including development funding for their own development (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 2). A CDD project is distinguished from a CBD one in that the CDD emphasized the role that communities, or the locally-elected bodies, play in driving the development process, rather than being passive beneficiaries. One popular definition of the CDD given by World Bank has been commonly cited in development literature:

> CDD gives control of decision and resources to community groups. The groups often work in partnership with demand-responsive support organizations and service providers, including elected governments, the private sector, NGOs, and central government agencies. the CDD is a way to provide social and infrastructure services,

organize economic activities and resource management, empower the poor, improve the governance and enhance the security of the poorest ((Dongier *et al.*, 2001: 303).

What emerges from the above definition is that the devolution of control over decision making and resources is the defining process in the CDD. The CDD program is basically a new participatory development model in which the control over decision making and resources is devolved to the local communities and their locally elected bodies. Although participatory development is a well-established idea in development literature, the CDD model is relatively new as it has only been promoted by international development agencies only since the late 1990s (Wong and Guggenheim, 2005: 254).

As the devolution of control may take multiple forms and people's participation may take multiple levels, the CDD represents a broad set of participatory efforts. Therefore, the amount of power devolved, or in other words, the level of people's participation informs the nature of a CDD initiative. Based on the levels of community control and people's participation in stages of the project cycle, Tanaka *et al.* (2006: 7) highlights five defining characteristics of a community- driven development initiatives:

(1) Community focus: targeted beneficiary as well as implementing agent is some form of CBOs or representative local government of a community. The operation of the CDD essentially consists of various small-scaled subprojects at community level.

(2) Participation in planning: the design of the community level subprojects is done through participatory planning by the community or CBO itself. Through this characteristic, development is said to be driven by the local community.

(3) Participation in implementation: this involvement may take the form of direct inputs as local contribution, or indirect inputs as supervision of contractors and operation and maintenance functions.

(4) Community control of resources: there are some forms of resource transfer from the donor to the community though the level of control by the community may vary, that is the control over decision-making is shared between the local communities and development agencies.

(5) Community-based monitoring and evaluation: Local community involves in monitoring and evaluating development activities either through direct participation or elected representatives.

These five characteristics indicate a continuum in the level of community participation in a CDD, however, only the most recent generations of the CDD programs have all these characteristics. Community control of resources is seen to be a distinguishing feature of CDD programs[6], while Community-based monitoring and evaluation is only found in some of the new generation of the CDD programs (Dongier et al, 2001: 305-308; Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 2; Tanaka *et al.*, 2006: 6).

The merit of the CDD as an effective mechanism for poverty reduction rests on three underlying processes of this approach: participatory decision-making, community organizing, and poverty targeting (Dongier et al, 2001: 304-308). First is the devolution of the control and decision to local communities so that poor people can be empowered immediately and directly (p.308). This is exercised through the direct participation of the poor in the local decision making. Second is the strengthening of local institutions to enhance networks of local people and their social ties, in other words, their social capital; that can positively affect both long-term development and the economic security of the local people (p.308). Finally, local knowledge mobilized through the CDD approach can

[6] Early generations of the CDD programs pre-1990s did not have this feature, and the first three features have been part of participatory development and community development projects since the 1970s.

effectively improve poverty targeting to enhance the economic security of the local people (p.307).

For the institutional arrangements between community and demand-responsive agency in the CDD approach, three broad sets have been used in development practice: partnership between the community and local government; partnership between the community and private support organizations including NGOs or private firms; and direct partnership between the community and higher-level government or the controlling body of a central fund and this may be a large NGO. In each set of institutional arrangement, there is a great variation regarding exact role of the range of players; and there are also CDD initiatives which do not rely on external resources at all (Dongier *et al.*, 2003:308). Nowadays, the first institutional arrangement of the CDD approach is of great interest of governments and development agencies because of its scope for combining democratic decentralization and poverty reduction. Therefore, this study focuses exclusively on a CDD program relying on partnerships between local communities and local government.

3.3. Transformation of Power Relations in the CDD Approach

The discussion in Chapter Two indicates that empowerment of the poor must involve the transformation of existing power relations which can be characterized by the creation of 'political capabilities' for the poor. As the 'political capabilities' refers to 'institutional and organizational resources ... to support effective political action', or in the other words, the ability to 'create new rules, transform social preferences, ... secure new resources as they become available' (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999: 7), the CDD approach, with underlying processes discussed in previous section, can create 'political capabilities' for the poor through two processes: participatory decision-making process can directly impact on existing pattern of political representation of the poor and increase their ability to influence on the local rules and decisions (Dongier et al, 2001: 308); and

community organizing process can improve people's networks which are important to both individual development and collective actions of the local communities (Dongier et al, 2001: 308; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 226). Therefore, the creation of 'political capabilities' of the poor in the CDD approach can be assessed by examining the improvements in social networks of local people, and their participation in local decision-making.

In addition, poverty targeting while being not directly related to the 'political capabilities' of the poor, can affect the economic security of the poor and their mobilization (Osmani, 2000: 23). The design of poverty targeting mechanisms can significantly affect the competition between local groups and community solidarity[7] (Dupar and Badenoch, 2002: 22). Therefore, the performance of poverty targeting is likely to have important impacts on the creation of the 'political capabilities' of the poor. This suggests that an understanding of poverty targeting scheme is essential for the assessment of transformation in the CDD approach. The next section examines the conceptions, problems, and limitations of three underlying processes of the CDD approach: poverty targeting, community organizing and participatory decision-making.

3.3.1. Poverty Targeting

Poverty targeting refers to the extent to which scarce resources provided by the donor or government, are targeted to the poorest group. According to the proponents of the CDD (Chebil and Haque, 2003: 126; Dongier et al, 2001: 307), this approach is much more effective in poverty targeting than other top-down approaches. The improvement in the poverty targeting effects of the CDD approach is mainly attributed to the community

[7] Dupar and Badenock (2002: 22) studied a rural development project in Vietnam and found that the exclusion of wealthier households from receiving direct support raised competition among the villagers to qualify as poor and precluded the formulation of holistic plans that would be socially and economically sustainable.

involvement in selecting the beneficiaries, or in the other words, participatory targeting. Each targeting mechanism is mainly characterized by two factors: the method of targeting and the intermediary agent who implement the targeting (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 378). The intermediary agent is in charge of assessing the eligibility and implementing the delivery. The agents can be the program officials, local government staff, locally-elected bodies, or the whole community. Obviously, the internal structure, accountability relations, and value system of the implementing agents are important to the targeting outcomes.

The targeting methods that have been applied in development and poverty reduction are of three types (Grosh, 1994: 34): individual assessment, categorical targeting, and self-targeting. Individual assessment methods require the program agent to decide the eligibility on the case-by-case basis. It may involve a direct means testing, an evaluation based on proxy indicators, or a subjective evaluation (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 378; Glewwe, 1992: 303-305; Ravallion and Sen, 1994: 813). Categorical targeting gives the eligibility to all members of a group defined by easily identifiable characteristics or traits. The traits can be location (geographic targeting) or the restrictions of benefits to disadvantaged groups: elderly, ethnic, or invalid groups and the like. Self-targeting relies on the individual decision of a potential candidate to participate or not. Though the benefit or service is in principle available to all, but it is designed in such a way that discourages the non-poor's participation. The costs of time, labor requirements, or a low quality service can be tools of self-targeting. A suitable targeting mechanism may involve one, or a combination of more than one of these targeting methods.

Participatory targeting is increasingly popular in poverty reduction. The key advantage is that it can target the poor in the absence of reliable information for means testing (Dongier et al, 2001: 307) and it reduces the likelihood of adverse selection

problems (Chebil and Haque, 2003: 126). Local communities often have better information on household characteristics, needs, and recent events upon which the beneficiary eligibility is determined than do the external agencies that must rely on crude proxy indicators. Better information also helps to enhance the enforcement, reduce administration costs, and increase benefits delivered to the poor (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 382). Generally, the donor or government agencies work in partnership with the local communities to implement the targeting. The responsibility of setting the criteria by which eligibility and assistance level will be judged is to a certain extent devolved to the community agents. Complete devolution is not common and most participatory targeting mechanisms give local communities a varying level of discretion within a set of rules and regulations (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 381).

There is empirical evidence to confirm the advantage of using local level agents in targeting. Alderman (2000) evaluates a safety-net program in Albany which covers some 20 per cent it populations, providing block grants to the local governments, and gave them the right to determine eligibility and the amount of transfer to beneficiaries. It found that the poverty targeting based on local staff' judgment exceeded what could be expected from targeting on the basis of proxy indicators done by the center. Further, local authorities appeared to have access to information that is less likely captured in household surveys and to effectively allocated program benefits among the households under their jurisdiction (Alderman, 2002: 399). Similarly, Adams *et al.* tested the validity of a Rapid Rural Appraisal wealth-ranking technique by comparing its results with that of typical socioeconomic indicators from a standardized household survey in rural Bangladesh. The key informants were asked to classify 1,637 households into three wealth groups according to a number of predetermined criteria. A questionnaire survey was subsequently

administered to each household. It was found that health, demographic and economic variables derived from the questionnaire differed significantly according to wealth groups categorized by the key informants. This finding proves the validity of measuring poverty through RRA (Adams *et al.*, 1997: 1169-1171).

On the other hand, literature points to four broad problems of using local knowledge for targeting: the weak reliability of local knowledge; the variation of local preference; the elite capture; and the tensions arising from the design of participatory program. Several studies raised the issue of weak reliability of using local knowledge in wealth ranking; for example, Bergeron *et al.*'s (1998: 1989-1901) study[8] of a agricultural development project in Honduras found that the consistency of results from different groups of people doing the ranking was alarmingly low. This suggests that rankings by local informants should be used with caution as there are many factors which may affect the reliability of this technique: training of informants, choice of ranking criteria, informant selection, and definition of target population.

Further, apart from the technical problems in using local knowledge, participatory targeting may be ineffective if the local preference is not pro-poor, which is often the case. That is principles of social justice and the understanding about poverty reduction of the local communities may vary among communities and not be the same as what development and welfare agencies might assume (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 384). This variation may affect the level of willingness the communities target the benefits to the poor, for example,

---

[8] Bergeron et al.(1998: 1999-1901) study assesses the reliability of food security ranking by local informants in the context of a agricultural development project in Honduras. The study was conducted among members of poor farmer's groups in 13 different communities. Participants were split into small sets of three to five persons, and each set was asked to classify all households in their group into one of three predefined categories of household food security. The groups were rather homogeneous as all members are poor.

King's (1997: 361) study found a significant variation in the practice of Poor Law - a poor relief program in England - among local communities. Chan *et al.*'s (1992: 189) study of the welfare for the childless elderly in Chinese villages reported:

> Though production teams were required by law to provide food, shelter, clothing and a coffin for any needy childless elderly, the amount was a pittance, providing only for the barest subsistence. Other team members looked down upon such welfare recipients as a drain on the production team's resources (p.189).

In addition, elite capture is another common problem in participatory initiatives, where decentralized power is used to influence political outcomes through manipulation of information and perceptions, or by limiting the voice of other in order to gain resources (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 384). While participation has become a mainstream in development, Abraham and Platteau (2000: 20) are skeptical about the potential benefits of decentralized social programs in 'repressive societies where mutual control is constantly exercised, suspicions are continuously entertained about others' intentions, inter-personal conflicts are pervasive, and a rigid rank-based hierarchical structure governs people's life'. This concern is supported by several empirical studies. For example, Galasso and Ravallion's (2000: 25-26) study[9] of the Bangladesh Food-for-Education Program found that inequality within villages affected the relative power of the poor in local decision making; in this case, the effectiveness in targeting the poor of the communities under this program was lower when the village inequality was highest.

Finally, the design of participatory programs may create tensions between achieving poverty targeting and other objectives. The evaluation of performance is often relies on

[9] Galasso and Ravallion's (2000: 25-26) study examines the targeting performance of Bangladesh Food-for-Education Program which aimed at increasing school attendance rate for poor children by providing food to selected households. In this program, the center – ministry and district government – chose the participating communities but the selection of beneficiary households within each community was left to the local committees.

readily measured and observed variables, such as the number of clients attended, the number of clients who find jobs, or repayment rate. However, these criteria may provide incentives against reaching the poorest or most vulnerable, whose participation and performance in economic activities are often less than the better-offs. For example, the Grameen Bank, whose success in terms of targeting outcomes[10], seem to have been achieved by insisting on categorical targeting, such as targeting women, and imposing wealth ceiling eligibility requirements (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 388).

In summary, the above discussion has reflected three important points about targeting with local involvement. First, better access to information about local situation provides participatory targeting a great potential to effectively target the poor. In addition, the targeting performance is to a considerable extent affected by the local preference, local power relationship, and ability of local agents in making their superior information operational. Finally, the design of development program itself can affect the targeting performance of the local communities.

3.3.2. Community Organizing

Strengthening of Community-based organizations (CBOs) is an important process in the CDD approach (Dongier et al, 2001: 308). For the proponents of this approach, the strengthening of the CBOs and the devolution of control over decisions and resources to these organizations give the communities the opportunity to develop social capital of local people through enhancing social ties among local people and building linkages with people at positions of power outside their network. The improved social capital can facilitate long-term development as well as enhance economic security of the poor (Dongier et al, 2001: 308).

---

[10] The success of Grameen Bank is, however, contested.

In development literature, social capital is a vexed term as it means 'many things to many people' (Narayan and Pritchett, 1999: 872). Social capital can be conceptualized as the resources, such as ideas, information, support, that individuals can acquire as a result of their relationships with other people (Grootaert, *et al.*, 2004: 3). The underlying idea of social capital is that a person's families, friends, or associations, constitute an important asset which can be mobilized for material gains. Further, this idea also holds for groups or communities (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 226).

One way to analyze social capital is to distinguish between two complementary forms: structural and cognitive. While the former is directly based on structural processes, the latter is to do with people's minds and thus less amenable to measurement (Uphoff and Wiyayaratna, 2000: 1876). Structural social capital includes the roles, rules, procedures, and social networks that establish patterns of social interactions, and thus more objective and observable. Structural forms of social capital facilitate people's involvement in collective action by lowering transaction costs and accumulating social learning (p.1876). Cognitive social capital refers to shared norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that induce people to cooperate, therefore, they are a more subjective and intangible concept, and so difficult to measure.

Social capital in either form has two components: bonding and bridging social capital (Grootaert, *et al.*, 2004: 4; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 231-233). Bonding social capital refers to the social ties between people who are similar in terms of their demographic characteristics, such as family members, neighbors, close friends, work colleagues, or group members; while bridging social capital is characterized by the ties that transcend different social divides – groups of people with different characteristics and views, often across communities. Both components of social capital are important for

economic development in local communities. Granovetter (1995: 156-157) argues that economic development depends on both the benefits of close community membership and the networks that transcend their community. However, there is a difference between the effects of these two types of social capital. While the within-community social ties are crucial for the ability of people to cope with risks and vulnerability, the bridging social capital can be used for strategic advantage and advancement of material interests (Kozel and Parker, 2000: 66). This discussion suggests a strategy for poverty reduction in general and empowerment of the poor particularly: 'finding ways and means by which to transcend social divides and build social cohesion' for the poor people (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 242).

However, social capital can be destructive as well as constructive. Portes (1998: 15-18) identified at least four negative consequences of social capital. First, the strong ties among group members that bring benefits to the insiders can prevent the outsiders from access (p.15). Second is that the closed community may prevent the success of business initiatives by their members, that is, 'cozy intergroup relations of the kind found in solidarity communities can give rise to gigantic free-riding problem, as less diligent members enforce on the more successful all kinds of demands backed by the shared normative structure' (p.16). This can make the opportunities for entrepreneurial accumulation and success dissipate. Third, community and group participation necessarily creates demand for the conformity of the members which results in a strong social control and restrictive personal freedom (p.16). This may lead to negative economic consequences as 'group loyalties may be so strong that they isolate members from information about employment opportunities, foster a climate of ridicule toward efforts to study and work hard, or siphon off hard-won assets (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 231). Finally, in the

situations where group solidarity is created by a common experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society, group cohesion obstructs individual success, keep members of a downtrodden group in place, and force the more ambitious to escape from it (Portes, 1998: 17). In a nutshell, it is noteworthy that social capital, in the form of social control, can cause effects which are exactly the opposite of its benefits commonly celebrated in the literature, that is, while the bounded solidarity facilitates economic development among some groups, they may have negative effects for other groups.

Further, the notion that community organizing process in the CDD approach can empower the poor is challenged by a criticism that the operationalization of social capital through the enhancement of local area-based association as advocated by development agencies obscures both class differentiation and power relations (Fine, 2001: 57; Harriss, 2001: 113-115). Harriss argues that social capital is an aspect of the differentiation of classes, and by its nature is part of power relations in a social system. Though it is possible for the resource-poor groups of people to have strong social networks, they can deliver only few benefits to their members (p. 115). As social capital emphasizes the social networks that people can access and mobilize resources, it can contribute to inequality because the elites 'are able to access internal and external social networks that are more powerful and wealthy' (Rao and Walton, 2004: 16). Conversely, the poor have less influential networks which, while helping them cope with the shocks of life, restrict the resources they can mobilize (p.16). In this scheme, different groups in a social system have different types of social capital, and so it can perpetuate an inequality (Rao and Walton, 2004: 16).

So at practical level, the effectiveness of the CDD programs in building social capital for local communities is controversial. Empirical studies show both success and failure in this respect. For example, Fox's (1996: 1097-1098) study, which looks at

indigenous communities in rural Mexico, found that social capital can be produced through decentralization and is enhanced through the interaction of local societal actors and external actors in civil society. Though it may also be produced from below, external allies still appear crucial in the ability of such organizations to survive. The example of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF)[11] found that though decision-making at community level had been dominated by local leaders, the program had increased the trust between people and built a good feeling within the communities (Rao and Ibanez, 2003: 33).

On the other hand, a study of the Armenia Social Investment Fund (ASIF), found that the program did not change the nature of the existing institutions and social relations in Armenia, but rather strengthened and reinforced the existing positions and dominant roles of local leaders and created no change in social relations (Babajanian, 2005: 457). A World Bank study of the Social Fund in Zambia and Malawi found that social fund 'operated as users rather than producers of social capital', that is the social networking skills developed through Social Fund, tend to help the elite attract external resources, rather than empower the poor (World Bank OED, 2002: 43). In other words, the rich may attract most resources from enhanced networking and further strengthen their power. This points to a central concern in analyzing the transformation impacts of the Chiase: whether the program creates equal impacts on the networks of the elite and that of the ordinary people. In the next section, the last underlying process of the CDD approach – participatory decision-making is examined.

3.3.3. People's participation in local decision-making

While being a popular term, participation is vexed. In development paradigms, it is a very ambiguous concept which is one of the most overused but least understood (Botes

[11] Social Fund is a form of the CDD approach.

and Rensburg, 2000:41). For recent decades, the concept of participation has gained a spectrum of meanings and a rise in the diversity of practices (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001:3). According to Pretty (1995: 1251), the term 'participation' has become a 'fashion' in development and that has created many paradoxes: It has been used to justify the extension of state's control as well as to build local capacity and self-reliance; it has been used to justify external decision as well as to devolve power and decision making away from external donors; it has been used for data collection as well as for interactive analysis.

There are many ways can be used to differentiate alternatives within the concept of participation. One important form of differentiation is to see participation as a means or participation as an end (Oakley, 1991:7). The former stands for the use participation to achieve some predetermined goals. In the other words, participation is a way of mobilizing the existing physical, economic and social resources of rural people with a view to achieve objectives of development programs and projects. Participation as a means considers the result of participation more important than the act of participation. Participation as an end is entirely different concept. Participation is seen as a process which unfolds over time and whose purpose is to develop the capacities of rural people to intervene more directly in development efforts (Oakley, 1991:8). Such a participatory process might not have predetermined measurable objectives or even direction. .

Participation is also commonly interpreted by relating to key stages of development programs including decision-making, implementation, benefit sharing and evaluation (Oakley et. al., 1991:6). This form of differentiation is useful as it suggests the structure and functions of people's participation in development efforts which are essential for the design and implementation of participatory development programs. Arnstein (1969) puts forward a ladder of citizen participation including eight rungs namely manipulation,

therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. The position in the ladder of participation is characterized by the degree of decision-making people experience. Similarly, Pretty (1995:1253) differentiates participation into seven types, ranging from manipulative and passive participation, at which people are informed what is to happen and perform the predetermined role, to self-mobilization where people take initiatives which is independent of external agencies (see table 1). This way of analysis of participation is less tied to immediate economic benefits and is concerned more with the control over resources and institutional issues. The progression from lower participation (type 1 and type 2) to higher participation (type 6 and type 7) is characterized by the increase in the amount of power being devolved to the local people, the formation of local organizations and the use of participatory methodologies.

Table 3.1: Typology of Participation

Typology	Characteristics
1. Manipulative participation	Participation is simply pretence; people have no power.
2. Passive participation	Participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions.
4. Participation for material incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for example, labor, in return for food, cash or other material incentives.
5. Functional participation	Participation seen by external agencies as a mean to achieve project goals, especially reduced cost. Participation as a mean.
6. Interactive participation	Participation by joining analysis, planning, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right.
7. Self-Mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems.

Source: Pretty (1995:1253).

Participation, then, can be understood as a process which enables people to organize themselves, to identify needs, and to share in the design, implementation, monitoring and

evaluation of activities as well as in the benefits from them. The activities should be generated from the resources which local people have access to and may be promoted through external supports. Further, without holding adequate power people can not make effective decisions. Therefore, the significance of people's participation lies at the level where decisions are taken. Thus, distribution of power is essential to provide momentum in participation.

In the CDD approach, people's participation is one of underpinning mechanisms. According to Dongier et al (2001: 308) a distinguished feature of the newer form of the CDD is the incorporation of local knowledge into the decision making process which controls the local development and resources. It is expected that through this participatory decision-making process, the local development is driven by the local needs and demands – what can be seen as the exercise of 'voice' and 'choice', or in the other word, empowerment. Regarding the level of participation, these CDD projects often promote a high level participation, as 'partnership' or 'interactive participation' (see above discussion), and get people involved in all key decision-making processes. The benefits of participatory decision-making are diverse; the most notable ones include more relevant activities selection, better targeted effects, more cost-effectiveness, more equitably distributed program benefits, smaller leakages of development funds, and thus more sustainable development (Dongier et al, 2001: 305-308).

However, the development literature has highlighted a number of problems that may obstruct direct participatory decision-making. One key obstacle to participatory decision making is dependency, which is often ingrained in the rural poor (Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 13), and the lack of organizational skills (Korten, 1981a: 191). At practical level, this means that as the rural poor like most people, who have been accustomed to leaving

decision making to their leaders, may not take up the opportunity when decision-making power is given to them. The lack of experience with participatory activities, and the lack of skills in 'organizing meeting, reaching consensus, choosing competent leadership, keeping records, and handling organizational fund' may leave many poor communities incapable of responding to the demands of participation (Korten, 1981a: 191). Second, direct participatory decision-making may entail high costs on local people, such as the amount of time required for participation, and emotional stress for the socially and economically disadvantaged, since genuine participation for such groups may take the positions that are contrary to the interests of more powerful groups (Johnson, 2001: 525; Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 6; Moore and Putzel, 1999: 10). And so, when people judge that the projects do not suit their interests, or the costs outweigh the benefits, they may opt out (White, 1996: 14). Third, while the CDD is often promoted at an administrative unit referred to as a community, which in fact may not constitute a homogenous economic and social entity (Korten, 1981a: 193; Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 13). The use of administrative boundaries can be meaningless where settlement patterns are distinct from such boundaries. In many cases, existing factional, ethnic or religious identities complicate the picture, so any unqualified use of the term 'community' can obscure local structures of power.

Finally, the attitudes and implementation styles of bureaucratic government bodies will not change by exposing to participation (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 7). To embrace the participatory planning exercises into the work of public bodies, further complicates the accountability relations that control them. Participatory processes are often unpredictable and may leave the officials vulnerable to criticism by the principals. The conflicts between lines of accountability may affect the commitment to participatory approach of public bodies supporting participation. The situation is even worse if the public bodies themselves

lack participatory skills, experience, or practice.

Given above limitations, what is often labeled as 'local knowledge' in participatory development projects may be just a construct of the planning context, which is shaped by the power relations between local elite and the people, and between communities and the development agencies. In an examination of several participatory projects in India, Mosse (2001: 19-25) identified four aspects of this problem: first, knowledge may be shaped by the local relations of power, that is the asymmetrical access to information and capabilities between the local elite and the poor may lead to the dominance by the elite in decision-making to reflect their interest. Second, outsider agendas may be expressed as local knowledge, whereby project facilitators being the most influential actor in local decision-making process, direct and shape the PRA processes. Villager's 'needs' are therefore often shaped by perceptions of what the project can deliver and what can be considered legitimate. There may be also local collusion in the planning consensus, so that "local knowledge' is shaped by both locally dominant groups and project interests. Powerful local people actively concur in the process of problem definition and planning because it allows them to manipulate the program to serve their own interests, and suppresses difference and encourages consensus and action over detailed planning. Finally, the concept of participation may be used just to legitimize the project's previously established priorities and needs. Since the long-term goals of participatory approach have little real support from either the community or the project staff, the processes of participatory decision-making may be an exercise to satisfy the operational demands of the project.

Two important points emerge from the above discussion. First, participatory decision-making may be strongly influenced by local power relations where local communities may be heterogeneous and different groups have different levels of

capabilities and information accessibility. Given various limitations of the poor and marginalized, it is likely that the better-off would dominate the local democratic decision making. Second, the mobilization of 'local knowledge' and the performance of villagers in participatory decision-making are strongly influenced by the pre-existing relationship between the development agency and the local communities. Therefore, promoting meaningful participation in local decision-makingto facilitate the creation of 'indigenous knowledge' rather than 'planning knowledge', the commitment and to people's participation of the development agency is essential.

The three underlying processes in the CDD feature a democratic decentralization system[12]. The next section examines the nature and dynamics of the democratic decentralization system in order to gain the insight on the performance of the CDD approach. This sheds light into the downward accountability of the local government, a factor that may be important in the empowerment of the poor.

3.4. Downward Accountability as a Key Factor of Empowerment through the CDD

3.4.1. CDD as a Decentralization System

Democratic decentralization now is a dominant strategy in community development and poverty reduction. This strategy is widely claimed as the effective tool for promoting people's participation and making the local governance more responsive (Kingsley, 1996:

---

[12] Decentralization is a broad term which generally can be separated into three broad types. Administrative decentralization (Deconcentration) is said to occur when power is devolved from higher levels in a system to their appointees at lower levels. In deconcentration, the agents of higher levels of system move to lower level arenas but remain accountable only to higher level in the system. Fiscal decentralization is said to occur when higher levels in a system cede influence over budget and financial decisions to lower levels. Finally, democratic decentralization (devolution) refers to the transfer of power controlling decision and resources from higher level to lower level authorities, and is largely or wholly independent of higher levels of the system. In devolution, the local power holders maintain both upward and downward accountability (Manor: 1999: 5). Crucially, democratic decentralization entails a system of governance in which citizens possess the right to hold local officials to be accountable to them.

420; Manor, 1999: 88-93). The importance of democratic decentralization in poverty reduction is affirmed by the World Bank (1995):

> There is no feasible substitute to an approach in which local governments, with the active participation of their communities, take the initiative and responsibility for the actions conducive to their institutional development (p.27).

Democratic decentralization is now pervasive in developing countries and the CDD approach, or in other words, democratic local governance, is widely seen as an effective mechanism to promote decentralization to reach down into communities, enable informed input into public decisions, and provide incentives to local governments to empower local communities and be accountable to their input (Silver, 2003: 422; Wong and Guggenheim, 2005: 257-258). The CDD approach creates a decentralization system in which the control over decision making and resources is devolved to the communities and is exercised by the people themselves – through participation, or by locally-elected bodies. The institutional arrangement of the CDD programs involves the partnership between the local government and the community with the local communities controlling the use and management of a development fund, while the local government is in charge of creating enabling environment, supporting and facilitating the planning and implementation of development activities (Dongier et al, 2001: 311).

On the other hand, devolution is susceptible to a number of problems; among the most serious are elite capture, the cost of direct participation, and rising inequality. Elite capture refers to whether the local decision-making reflects the disproportionate influence by the elite group and devolution may simply empower local elites, and perpetuate the existing unequal relationships, especially in rural areas where large numbers of people are dependent on small numbers of local elite (Johnson, 2001: 525; Moore and Putzel, 1999: 15; Wong and Guggenheim, 2005: 253). Direct participation in political issues may also

entail a heavy cost to poor people (Johnson, 2001: 525; Moore and Putzel, 1999: 10; Wong and Guggenheim, 2005: 253), when a polarized community erupts into conflict as devolution leads to the exclusion of one group from government. Then there is the direct cost of political action, such as cost of travel and communication, which can deter the poor from sustaining coherent political movement. Multiple and potentially contradictory loyalties may undermine the solidarity of marginal groups, together with the inequality between the constituents can affect people's engagement in formal political processes. The extents to which the constituents have 'political tools' – such as, money, time, information, and literacy – may influence their performance in democratic processes (Johnson, 2001: 525).

Finally, decentralization theories emphasize the accountability relations the local power holders have to their constituents as the factor determining the effectiveness of decentralized systems (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 476; Blair, 2000: 27). The importance of accountability is reflected in Blair's (2000: 21) definition of democratic decentralization

> [Democratic decentralization] can be defined as meaningful authority devolved to local units of governance that are accessible and accountable to the local citizenry, who enjoy full political rights and liberty.

Therefore, regarding specifically to the CDD programs which rely on the partnership between the communities and the local government, the downward accountability of the local government is a potential determinant of the effectiveness of this approach. The following sections focus on the downward accountability of local government in the CDD approach.

3.4.2. Downward Accountability as an Empowerment Process

Accountability can be defined simply as 'an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions' (Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2008).

Accountability refers to the conduct and performance of an actor and the criteria that should be used in assessing that conduct and performance (Day and Klein, 1987: 2). It concerns a relationship between two parties A and B, where A is accountable to B if they must explain their actions to B, and could be adversely affected by B if B doesn't like the account (Goetz and Jenkins, 2002: 5), and so is 'a social and political process' and directly related to power relations (Day and Klein, 1987: 2). In a nutshell, accountability denotes a specific type of power: the capacity to demand someone to be answerable for past actions, and/or the capacity to impose a sanction for poor performance (Goetz and Jenkins, 2002: 6). As accountability denotes a power relation, 'the inability to make someone accountable for their actions is synonymous with the lack of power' (Day and Klein, 1987: 21). This raises an implication: in democratic systems where public bodies hold power on behalf of the citizenry, the empowerment of the constituents is directly linked to the extent to which these public bodies are accountable to them. Therefore, enforcing downward accountability of public bodies can be a mechanism to empower the citizens.

There are multiple accountability relations between the one obliged to account for their actions and to face sanction (accountability 'holdee'), and the one entitled to demand answers or impose punishments the (accountability 'holder') (Behn, 2001: 1). These relations together control the performance of public actors. This section addresses two questions: for what is a public body held downwardly accountable? And how is the downward accountability enforced?

For what is a Public Body held Downwardly Accountable

Accountability of an public body has three dimensions: accountability for finance; fairness; or performance (Behn, 2001: 6). First, accountability for finance is about being accountable for 'how the books are kept and how the money is spent' and can be dictated or

implied by law, regulations, or agreement[13]. As the financial rules, procedures and standards are clear and detailed, fiscal accountability can be achieved through auditing with specific benchmarks (Behn, 2001: 6). Second, accountability for fairness is about making sure that the public bodies observe 'the well-established norms of democratic government – specifically, for fairness'. These norms are codified into rules, what create process and procedures, that if properly followed, assure the fairness and equity of the public bodies (Behn, 2001: 8). If the public organization is found not following the rules, it may be sanctioned. Since the meaning of fairness can be transferred into specific rules, the accountability for fairness is relatively straightforward and can be achieved through auditing, oversight, and evaluation (Behn, 2001: 8).

Third, while accountability for finance and fairness reflects concerns for how the public body does its tasks, accountability for performance cares for the consequences of its actions. Accountability for performance of a public organization is characterized by the extent its expected outcomes are achieved (Behn, 2001: 10). Therefore, to hold a public body to be accountable for performance, the establishment of expectations for the outcomes it will create is essential. However, as the expectations for outcomes can be diverse, significantly different among different actors in a society, the crucial question regarding accountability for performance is: whose expectations should be taken into account? The answer could be that, in democratic systems, the public body holds the power on behalf of the constituents; therefore its accountability for performance must be based on the

[13] The establishment of accountability for finance involves clearly-defined steps: (1) to decide what values the public actor need to uphold; (2) to specify what it means to uphold these values by codifying them into specific rules, procedures and standards; (3) to create reporting mechanisms to demonstrate that the rules, procedures and standards have been observed; (4) give a separate organization the task of auditing these records to check whether the rules, procedures, and standards have been followed; and (5) if the failures or discrepancies are discovered, the actors may be punished.

expectations of the citizenry. Therefore, **accountability for performance** should mean accountability to the entire citizenry, or in other words, **downward accountability** (Behn, 2001: 10).

The above discussion suggests that downward accountability of the public body in democratic systems can be characterized by the extent to which the expectation of the constituents is satisfied. As this expectation may be contextual and vary over time, an effective way for the public body to meet the citizenry's expectation is to involve them into its decision-making process. Therefore, downward accountability of the public body can be measured through its efforts in facilitating people's participation in public decision-making and the implementation of these decisions.

How the Downward Accountability is Ensured

Accountability of the public actors is enforced by the accountability mechanisms. The importance of these mechanisms is reflected in Goetz and Jenkins's (2002: 6) definition of accountability which claims that the meaning of this concept involved not only the capacity to demand answerability but also the capacity to impose sanction. This suggests that in analyzing the accountability of an actor, we should be concerned 'not only with missing links but also with overloaded or ineffective ones' (Day and Klein, 1987: 22). Accountability mechanisms not only require the public bodies to face the consequences of their decisions but also give the sanctioning power to those most affected by the decisions – the constituents (Beutz, 2003: 402). The ability of the constituents to sanction the leaders creates a strong incentive for responsible and responsive decision making. This ability is important because the governmental response to the people's needs often depends on the pressure that is put on the government. These mechanisms make the decision makers respond effectively to the demands and needs of the grassroots people. The assessment of

the effectiveness of a downward accountability mechanism relies on an institutional analysis. Beutz (2003: 406) sees the effectiveness of an accountability relation as an institutional issue: '[accountability relation] can be understood as an institutional arrangement in which individuals affected by decisions have the power to hold the decision-makers responsible for their actions' (p.406). In short, a relation can be seen downwardly accountable if the governed can effectively sanction the rulers[14].

Although realizing that the measurement of downward accountability is non-exhaustive and context-specific, Beutz (2003: 409) proposes three themes that the assessment of an accountability relation can based on. First is the institutional ability of constituent of sanctioning leaders. This involves the following questions: Do the constituents have the power to sanction the leaders? Are decision-makers who cannot be sanctioned accountable to the constituents? Are the sanctions severe enough to provide a deterrent effect? Are the constituents given the power to sanction but then punished for its use? Second is the actual ability to sanction and the corresponding willingness to sanction, which involved the questions as follows: Are the constituents informed about the leader's decision? Are they interested in the decisions? Do the constituents hold sufficient sanctioning power to ensure that their voice is heard? How do they exercise power (individually or collectively)? Third, is the extent to which the public body is responsive to the constituents, that is to what extent is the sanctioning power of constituents been internalized by decision-makers. The above themes provide a useful guideline for analyzing

---

[14] John Dunn (cited by Beutz, 2003: 407) proposes four criteria for a relation being seen downwardly accountable: persons exercising decentralized powers are liable for their actions in exercising those powers; persons exercising decentralized powers are predictably identifiable as agents in the exercise of these powers to those to whom they are liable; persons exercising decentralized powers are effectively sanctionable for those acts once performed, and persons exercising decentralized powers are knowably so sanctionable for them in advance'

and assessing downward accountability in this study.

In summary, accountability can be conceptualized as a power relationship. In democratic systems, downward accountability of the public body is enforced through accountability relations, and directly affects the citizen's empowerment. Downward accountability of a public body may be measured through the efforts of this body to facilitate people's participation in public decision-making and the implementation of these decisions. The next section discusses a framework for analyzing decentralization systems.

3.4.3. A Framework for Analyzing Decentralization Systems

Decentralization is usually involved the transfer of powers in three dimensions: fiscal, administrative and democratic, as argued by Manor (1999: 7): 'if it is to have significant promise, decentralization must entail a mixture of all three types: democratic, fiscal, and administrative'. However, this complex framework does not allow for an easy systematic analysis of the effectiveness or extent of decentralized efforts. This study relies on Agrawal and Ribot's (1999: 474-479) framework for analyzing the extent to which decentralization has actually taken place in the CDD programs and any shortcomings of this approach. This framework suggests three dimensions underlying any act of decentralization namely, the powers of various actors, the domains in which they exercise powers, and to whom and how they are accountable. Hereunder, three perspectives of the framework are discussed.

Actors in Decentralization

The actors in the local arena may include appointed or elected officials, local NGOs, powerful individuals, or corporate bodies such as cooperatives, communities, and committees. Each of these actors is located in particular relations of accountability with certain types of power. These accountability relations depend on the constitution of powers of each actor, which can be based on ideology, wealth, election, appointment or other

means (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 476). Actors may be differentiated from each other by their beliefs and objectives; internal structure of their organization; membership base; funding sources; and the laws to which they are subject to. Because the dealings of a particular actor are impelled by their interest, it is likely that the same types of power devolved to different actors will lead to different outcomes. As a result, the nature of decentralization significantly depends on who exercise power, and the accountability relationships of which they are subject (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 476).

Type of Power

This frame work classifies decision making powers in decentralization systems into four broad types of powers of decision-making (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 476-477). The first power is to create rules or modify old ones. Power to 'create new rules' allows decentralized actors to legislate principles that structure decisions and actions concerning the opportunity, how, and to what extent ones can gain benefit from a given resource (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 476). Further is the power to make decisions about resources allocation. It increases autonomy, a form of discretionary authority, of the decentralized actor. Next is the power to implement and ensure compliance to the new and altered rules. It implies the power to execute and monitor whether actors are carrying out the roles they are supposed to perform, and also includes the power to impose sanctions and enforce them. Finally, the power to adjudicate disputes that arise in the effort to create rules and ensure compliance is important whenever new rules are created as contests and negotiations will require adjudication. Two important aspects of adjudication are accessibility and independence; that is people who are influenced by devolved power should have access to channels of adjudication and these channels should be independent from the power holders. If any of these decision-making powers change at the lower levels of the political-administrative hierarchy then we can say decentralization has occurred (p.477).

Accountability Relations

The transfer of power to lower-level actors is a defining feature of decentralization. The effectiveness of decentralization hinges on the accountability of the actor holding decentralized powers. To understand the accountability of the local actor, it is necessary to examine the relations of accountability existing between the actors (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 478). In devolution, as decision-making powers are devolved to the local actor on behalf of the constituents, the relations holding such actors downwardly accountable to their constituencies are of importance.

There are many ways to hold the local government downwardly accountable to their constituencies. While the most common ways are through electoral processes, other effective mechanisms include: procedures for recall; referenda; monitoring by media and NGOs; auditing and evaluation; public reporting by government; community education; the embeddedness of leaders in communities; the change of beliefs system of leader and community; performance awards; social movements; and government oversight of lower level of government (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 479).

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has raised two important points regarding the effectiveness of the CDD as a mechanism for empowering the poor. The empowerment of the poor in the CDD approach can be characterized by the creation of 'political capabilities' for the poor which is mainly relied on and affected by three underlying processes: poverty targeting, participatory decision-making, and strengthening local organizations. However, all these three processes have limitations which, if not properly managed, may affect the empowerment outcomes. This suggests that to understand the empowerment of the poor in the CDD approach, examining these underlying processes of this approach is essential. Second, as the CDD is basically a democratic decentralization system, its effectiveness is

determined by the downward accountability of the local government – the actor in charge of supporting the performance of local communities. Therefore, downward accountability of the local government is likely to have significant impacts on the performance of this development approach.

The next chapter establishes the context of poverty alleviation and the CDD approach in Vietnam. Initially, the chapter outlines the overview of poverty reduction in Vietnam and introduces the CPRGS. Further, it discusses the institutional context of Vietnamese village communities that provides the basis for an understanding of the implementation of the CDD approach in Vietnam. Finally, the key characteristics of the Chiase CDD program are presented.

Chapter Four: Context of the CDD Approach in Vietnam

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapters review the literature on the notion of empowerment and key characteristics of the CDD approach as an empowerment mechanism which inform the theoretical basis for analyzing the effectiveness of the Chiase program in empowering the poor people. This chapter will examine the context of the CDD approach in Vietnam generally, and the Chiase program particularly. Specifically, four themes being discussed in this chapter include: the situation of poverty alleviation and inequality in Vietnam; the key contents of the Comprehensive Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRGS), which relies on the CDD as a key approach to poverty alleviation at local level; the context of the CDD approach in Vietnam; and the profile of the Chiase program as well as an analysis of its decentralization system.

While economic growth has achieved remarkable success in Vietnam, some issues of poverty and inequality have also been experienced. Since the 1990s, poverty reduction has become a central concern of the government as well as many international agencies. However, while the achievements in economic growth and overall poverty reduction were encouraging, by the turn of the 21st century, inequality appeared as a pressing problem that may affect economic growth as well as the socio-economic stability of the country (Vo and Pham, 2004: 83). This chapter finds that inequality increased in multiple relations: between the rich and the poor, between rural and urban areas, between regions, between occupations, and between ethnic groups.

To cope with the problems, in 2002 the government of Vietnam issued the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy which rest on fours pillars: 'pro-

poor' economic growth; empowerment of the poor through decentralization; human resource and environmental development; and social protection for vulnerable groups. The Vietnamese government's empowerment approach to poverty reduction prescribes a radical change in the design and implementation of poverty reduction programs to have a strong focus on people's empowerment in the economic and political spheres (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 63). This approach was characterized by the devolution of control over decision-making and resources to the local community in order to empower the poor and enhance local governance. The Chiase program – the focus of this study – is an example of this empowerment approach to poverty reduction.

Acknowledging the contextual nature of the CDD approach (Mansuri and Rao, 2004: 30), this Chapter attempts to examine the existing socio-economic and institutional context of the CDD approach in Vietnam with the emphases being placed on the social stratification, community autonomy, and people's participation in local decision-making. Finally, key characteristics of the Chiase program, including goals, vision, principles, organizational structure, planning and management procedures, are discussed and the decentralization system in this program is analyzed.

4.2. Poverty and Inequality in Vietnam in Early 2000s

Following the reunification of the country in 1975 until the mid 1980s, Vietnam was one of the poorest countries in the world. The country's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 1985 was estimated to be 130USD per year making it 'one of the World's five poorest countries'[15] (Glewwe, 2004: 1). About seven out of every ten Vietnamese people were living in poverty (World Bank, 1999: ii). The national economy was stagnant,

[15] This assessment may be misleading as it does not take in to account the social wages, i.e. the subsidization of health and education and other services provided by the State. For example, according to Kerkvliet and Porter (1995: 17), the costs of health care are often the single most important cause of chronic indebtedness for the bottom 15 percent of the population.

agricultural production had low productivity, and was insufficient to feed the growing population, and the country was heavily dependant on subsidized imports of essential goods and industrial products from the Soviet Union. However, since the launch of economic Reform in the 1980s, and particularly the market-oriented reform of 1989, Vietnam has transformed itself into one of the successful economies in the world in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction and household welfare (Do *et al.*, 2006: 13; Glewwe, 2004: 1; Vo and Pham, 2004: 63). Stable and high GDP growth rate, which was about 7.4 per cent (in the period 1995-2000) and 7.04 per cent (in the period 2001-2003), provided a strong basis for poverty reduction and the improvement of social welfare on a large scale (Vu, 2004: 210).

Poverty data[16], gathered through the Household Living Standard Survey, showed that Viet Nam had achieved remarkable success in poverty reduction over the 1990s. The incidence of absolute poverty as measured according to the Poverty Line based on the international standard substantially decreased over the period 1993–2002 (Do *et al.*, 2006: 19; Vo and Pham, 2004: 83). The poverty rate went down from 58.1 per cent 1993 to 28.9 per cent 2002. The fact that the poverty incidence in 2002 was only approximately half of 1993 levels represents an impressive success in poverty reduction if it is compared to a major United Nations' Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty over a longer period from 1990 to 2015[17] (Poverty Task Force, 2002: 31). If the depth of poverty is of concern, poverty reduction is also evident as the poverty

---

[16] Details about the measurement of poverty in Vietnam are presented in Box 1.

[17] The 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) is a comprehensive agenda for reducing the poverty by 2015 which includes eight goals, with a total of eighteen specific targets: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equality and empower women; Reduce child mortality; Improve maternal health; Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Ensure environmental sustainability; Develop a global partnership for development.

Box 4.1 Estimating Poverty in Vietnam

There have been two approaches to the measurement of poverty in Vietnam: one was calculated by the GSO which is often referred to as the international poverty line, and the other was calculated by MOLISA which is often referred to as the national poverty line. Both poverty lines are explicitly acknowledged in the "CPRGS' which was approved in May 21, 2002.

The international poverty line is based on the Viet Nam Living Standards Survey (VLSS) undertaken by the GSO with support from international development agencies. This poverty line includes the minimum consumption level of both food (70%) and non-food items (30%) and is determined by a two-step procedure. The first step is to establish the price of a Vietnamese basket of food items deemed to be necessary for good nutritional status. This is estimated internationally at an average of 2100 calories per person per day. The actual consumption of the third quintile (the sample households were equally divided into five quintiles according to their per capital consumption expenditures) was closest to this level of minimum food intake. The second step is to add the costs of the non-food items, which were then derived from the actual levels of the consumption of non-food items of the third quintile. The general international poverty line amounts to the equivalent of US$109 and US$127 per capita per year in 1993 and 2002 respectively.

The poverty lines used by MOLISA are more in the nature of a relative poverty line. Their level tends to be influenced by the amount of resources that MOLISA has available for special assistance programs for the poor. MOLISA surveys poor households at the commune level and is able to produce a detailed picture of where the poor live and what their needs are. The national poverty line in the period 2001-2005 is: VND 960 000 per year in rural mountainous and island regions; VND 1.2 million per year in rural plain areas; and VND 1.8 million per year in urban areas. The national poverty line in the period 2006-2008 is: VND 2.4 million per year in rural areas; and VND 3.0 million per year in urban areas.

Source: National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001; Decision 170/2005/QD-TTg; Decision 143/2001/QD-TTg.

index gap[18] of the poor decreased sharply from 19 per cent in 1993 to 7 per cent in 2002. This indicator shows that not only the proportion of poor people decreased but also their consumption shortfall relative to the poverty line also did.

[18] Poverty index gap reflects the distance between the average consumption expenditures of people living below the poverty line and the poverty line itself.

The Household Living Standard Surveys also showed a significant improvement during this period in non-income indicators such as: education enrolment rates, life expectancy, health insurance coverage, access to electricity, clean water, sanitation and the possession of durable goods (see table 4.1). Enrolment rates impressively increased for all levels of education. The enrolment rate for upper secondary school was doubled between 1998 and 2002 from 29 per cent to 42 per cent. Over the same period, the rate for lower secondary school rose from 62 per cent to 72 per cent. The primary school enrolment rate already high in 1993 with 87 per cent continued to increase to 90 per cent in 2002. Life expectancy at birth also increased to 71.3 years in 2002. The coverage of health care insurance, the percentage of households who have health insurance or free health care cards almost doubled in four years: from 16 per cent in 1998 to approximately 31 per cent in 2002. Access to electricity, clean water and sanitation all showed a marked improvement. The percentage of households having access to electricity doubled between 1993 and 2002 with 49 per cent and 87 per cent of population respectively. The percentage of population with access to clean water almost doubled during the same period, rising from 26 per cent in 1993 to 49 per cent in 2002. Improvement was also evident in access to sanitation with the increases of the percentage of population with access to hygienic latrines from 10 per cent in 1993 to 25 per cent in 2002. Data on the possession of durable goods such as televisions and motorbikes also showed a substantial improvement. The percentage of households owning a television set rose significantly from 22 per cent in 1993 to 78 per cent in 2004 while the percentage of households possessing a motorcycle climbed from 7 per cent to 45 per cent during this period (Do *et al.*, 2006: 24; Vu, 2004: 210).

Table 4.1: Selected Social Indicators in 1993-2004 Period

Non-Income Indicators	1993	1998	2002
Education and Healthcare			
Primary enrolment Rate	87	91	90
Lower Secondary Enrollment	30	62	72
Upper Secondary Enrollment	-	29	42
% of population with Health insurance or free Healthcare card	-	16	30
Access to infrastructure			
% population living in commune having clinic	93	97	99
% population using electricity as a main source of lighting	49	78	87
% population with access to clean water	26	41	49
% population having access to hygienic latrine	10	17	25
Possession of durable goods			
% of population owning a television set	22	56	68
% of population owning a motorbike	11	20	40

Source: Do Hoai Nam et al. (2006: 24).

Although Vietnam had achieved overall success in economic growth and social development, by the turn of this century, poverty was still arguably a central issue facing the country in medium terms of both absolute poverty and growing disparity between the rich and poor. In 2002, about a little less than one third of the population was still living in poverty. Moreover, a large component of Vietnam's population was just above poverty line, which means that a social or natural shock can considerably increase the number of poor people indicating a high level of vulnerability (Vo and Pham, 2004: 83). Although non-income development indicators, like the education enrolment rates, health insurance coverage or the percentage of communes with clinic, show impressive progress, the quality of public services, especially education and health care, has been a frequent topic in public debate including in sessions of the National Assembly (Do *et al.*, 2006: 22).

However, despite this strong story on poverty, inequality increased in many aspects of Vietnam society over the period 1993-2002. This was reflected in the rising disparity between the richest and the poorest groups, between rural and urban areas, between economic regions, and between ethnic groups (see Table 4.2). With the gap between rich and poor, the ratio between per capita expenditure of the 20 per cent richest and that of the 20 per cent poorest substantially increased from 4.6 in 1993 up to 6 in 2002 (Vo and Pham, 2004: 84), and the Gini coefficient went up ten per cent from 0.33 to 0.37 between 1993 and 2002 indicating that the income gap between the rich and the poor was widened[19] (Vo and Pham, 2004: 84).

With regard to the rural-urban disparity (see Table 4.2), the ratio of urban to rural per capita expenditures increased from 1.91 in 1993 to 2.35 in 2002 (Do *et al.*, 2006: 30). Poverty was further concentrated in rural areas during the 1990s with about 95 per cent of Vietnam's poor living in rural areas in 2002 as compared to 90 per cent in 1998 (Vo and Pham, 2004: 83). Poverty reduction in urban areas is much more substantial than that in rural areas, with urban poverty rate reduced by 75 per cent from 25.1 per cent to 6.6 per cent in 1993-2002 while in the same period rural poverty rate decreased by only half from 66.4 per cent to 35.6 per cent. In 1993, the ratio between the poverty rate in rural areas and that of urban areas was about 2.6. In 2002, this ratio went up to 5.4 indicating a much lower rate of poverty reduction in rural area (See Table 4.2). The high poverty rate in rural areas was mainly attributable to the dominance of agriculture as the primary occupation in this sector. Farming in rural Vietnam was lowly-diversified, vulnerable to natural calamities and therefore tended to be less productive as compared to off-farm employment. Further, as

[19] However, it is noteworthy that the Gini coefficient of Vietnam is just a bit larger than those of the countries having a similar level of Purchasing Parity Power–based per capita income with Vietnam such as Indonesia and Pakistan with the coefficients of 0.34 and 0.31 respectively (Do *et al.*, 2006: 25).

the level of rural industrialization in Vietnam was relatively low, the opportunity for off-farm income in rural areas was very limited (Steffanie and Truong, 2004: 112).

Table 4.2: Poverty Incidence by Regions and Ethnic Groups

Area	1993	2002
Whole Country	58.1 %	28.9 %
Urban	25.1 %	6.6 %
Rural	66.4 %	35.6 %
Region		
Northern Uplands	78.6 %	43.9 %
Red River Delta	62.9 %	22.4 %
North Central Coast	74.5 %	43.9 %
South Central Coast	49.5 %	25.2 %
Central Highland	69.9 %	51.8 %
Southeast	32.7 %	10.6 %
Mekong River Delta	47.1 %	23.4 %
Ethnicity		
Kinh and Chinese	53.9 %	23.1 %
Other minority groups	86.4 %	69.3 %

Source: Adapted from Vo Tri Thanh and Pham Hoang Ha (2004:83).

Inequality was also observed between seven economic regions of Vietnam (see Table 4.2). In 1993, the three poorest regions were North Mountainous, North Central Coast and Central Highland with poverty incidences of 78.6 per cent, 74.5 per cent and 69.9 per cent respectively. In 2002 these three regions still had the highest poverty incident with 43.9 per cent, 43.9 per cent and 51.8 per cent respectively. The most well-off region is Southeast with a poverty incidence of 32.7 per cent in 1993 and 10.6 per cent in 2002. In addition, this region contributed 42 per cent to the top expenditure quintile (Steffanie and Truong, 2004: 104). In terms of poverty reduction achievements, the best performer was the Red River Delta region whose poverty incidence decreased by 40.5 percentage points

during the period from 1993 to 2002 while the lowest poverty reduction rate was 18.1 percentage points experienced by the Central Highland. The rate of poverty incidence was lowest for lowland regions with big economic centers, relatively developed physical and social infrastructure, better human resources and greater number of off-farm income generation opportunities like Southeast and Red River Delta. As the table indicated, the poverty rate was highest for highland and mountainous regions, with inadequate infrastructure, poor human resources, lack of access to marketing channels and limited off-farm income-generation opportunities, such as North Mountainous, North Central Coast and Central Highland.

Parallel to regional differentiation is the differentiation based on ethnicity (Steffanie and Truong, 2004: 109-110). While the Kinh and Chinese reside in the lowland area, mainly in Red River Delta and Southeast regions, most other ethnic minorities reside in Northern Upland and Central Highland with the exception of only Khmer and Cham. The poverty incidence of Kinh or Chinese ethnic group was much lower than that of other ethnic minority groups while the poverty reduction rate in Kinh and Chinese groups was far higher than that of the other groups. In 1993, more than four-fifths of households belonging to the ethnic minority group were poor as compared to about half of households belonging to Kinh and Chinese ethnic groups. In 2002, the situation was replicated with poverty incidence of 23.1 per cent for Kinh and Chinese ethnic groups and 69.3 per cent for other minority group. Over this nine-year period, while poverty incidence of Kinh and Chinese ethnic group decreased by more than half from 53.9 per cent to 23.1 per cent, that of other ethnic minority groups decreased only by about one-fifth, from 86.4 per cent to 69.3 per cent (see Table 4.2).

What appears from the above statistics is that along with the impressive economic

growth and overall poverty reduction at a national scale, poverty has been concentrated in rural, remote, and mountainous areas. Within these areas, the poverty incidence was even more acute for ethnic minority groups and those people solely relying on farming employment. The persistence of poverty can be attributed to a range of interrelated problems: inadequate infrastructure, lack of investment and economic activities, lack of employment, and low level of human resources (Vu, 2004: 215). The key point that emerges is that although the shortcomings of a market-based economy were thoroughly recognized by the government of Vietnam, state intervention is not effective enough to tackle them. This raises the importance of devising a more effective poverty strategy for the country. The information about poverty reduction effort of Vietnam government in the 1990s and the introduction of the CPRGS is presented in the next section.

4.3. Poverty Reduction in Vietnam

Since the 1990s, when the market-oriented economy has resulted in the growing disparity between different sections of population, reducing poverty and inequality has become the central concerns of development partners in Vietnam including the government, Multilateral Organizations, and NGOs. Initially, the government of Vietnam tackled poverty and inequality by launching targeted poverty reduction programs. Vietnam's poverty reduction interventions comprised two separated groups of programs: Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (HEPR) Program and Program for Socio-Economic Development in Communes Faced with Extreme Difficulties which is normally abbreviated as Program 135.

HEPR was institutionalized as a component of Vietnam's national development policy at the 8th National Congress of Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) in 1996. In 1998, HEPR was set up as a national targeted program with the objective to eliminate chronic hunger and reduce poverty incidence. Later, the program's objective was extended to cover

employment creation. The HEPR program comprised six policies and eight sub-programs. The six policies dealt with the support given to the poor people in terms of: free healthcare, school tuition waiver, support for ethnic minorities, support for vulnerable people, funding for housing and funding for production tools. Then there were eight sub-programs that dealt with credit provision, agriculture extension, infrastructure, production assistance, training of local officials, settlement of migrants into new economic zone, sedentarization and settlement in poor communes, and model for replication. Program 135 was approved by Prime Minister and launched in 1998, and in 2000, the HEPR's component of 'Sedentarization' and 'Support for ethnic minorities' were integrated into Program 135. Now it comprises 5 sub-programs: commune's infrastructure development, inter-commune centers infrastructure development, resettlement, agriculture and forestry extension, and training for commune staff in remote and mountainous areas, and targets only disadvantaged remote and mountainous areas.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, it appeared from the data of Household Living Standard Surveys that although socio-economic development achievements of Renovation [Doi moi] were impressive, inequality increased in Vietnam. With the support of World Bank and other international donors, the CPRGS[20] was formulated and came into force in 2002. This is a set of policies that center on four key approaches to poverty reduction:

- promoting a sustainable pro-poor economic growth;
- facilitating empowerment of the poor people by ensuring people's basic needs and promoting good governance through decentralization and people's participation;

[20] The key contents of the CPRGS are presented in Appendix 5.

- enhancing human capital and reduce inequality through improvement in access to and quality of healthcare and education, environmental protection, disease prevention, gender equality, and the life of ethnic minorities; and
- establishing 'social safety nets' or 'social protection measures' for those marginal to or adversely affected by adjustment processes.

The approaches to poverty reduction at local level of the CPRGS are detailed in Box 4.2.

What emerged from the guiding principles of the CPRGS is the central role of the empowerment of the poor which is facilitated through improved people's access to basic needs and participation in local decision-making, strengthened local organizations and enhanced transparency and responsiveness of the local government. The above characteristics of the poverty reduction strategy at local level of the CPRGS feature a CDD approach being widely advocated by international development agencies (see Chapter 3). The next sections examine the socio-economic and institutional characteristics of rural communities in Vietnam in order to provide background for an understanding of the implementation of the CDD approach in this country.

Box 4.2: Approaches to Poverty Reduction at Local Level of the CPRGS

Improve the quality of life for all with respect of food, clothing, housing, transportation, health, training, work, access to information ... (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 62).

Ensure the transparency of the local budget; define clearly the process for preparing the budget and for allocating expenditures in each sector in order to make sure a pro-poor approach is adopted (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 53).

Develop a legal framework for civil society and community organizations at the local level to improve the participation of the poor in the development process and improve their capacity to get rid of poverty (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 62).

Pay a particular attention to improving gender equity, the advancement of women and the development of children.... (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 62).

Promote the participation of the people, including the poor, in the policy planning and policy implementation by advancing the application of the Grassroots Democracy Decree at the district and commune levels (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 62).

Ensure that people will be given adequate information about economic activities, plan targets, and financial resources for development projects and programs in their localities; they are entitled to comment on and contribute to the development of these projects and programs, to take part in their implementation, operation, and maintenance, to contribute their labor to these projects and programs, and to express their role as the owners of those projects and programs with a view to increasing their responsibilities in utilizing and managing infrastructure projects (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 63).

Carry out mechanism to enable communication officers to deliver information in education, technological training, marketing, state policies and regulations and administrative procedures in order to empower local people politically and economically, taking into account the roles of tribal heads in remote areas. Make sure grassroots democracy rules are applied to national targeted programs such as Program 135 and others (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 63).

In developing participatory mechanisms, attention must be given to vulnerable groups like elderly, women, disabled and ethnic minority people. It is necessary to take into consideration the specific work and aspiration of both men and women, so that all members of the community can voice their opinions and priorities easily (Government of Vietnam, 2002: 63).

Source: Government of Vietnam, 2002.

4.4. Socio-Economic and Institutional Context of the CDD Approach in Vietnam

This section examines the socio-economic and institutional context of the CDD approach in Vietnam. Given the contextual nature of the CDD approach, this discussion is important for the analysis of the effectiveness of this approach to poverty reduction, being advocated by the CPRGS of the country. The discussion focuses on the key themes which have important implications for the democratic decentralization nature of this development approach: social stratification, community autonomy and people's participation in local decision-makingin Vietnamese villages. The discussion covers two historical periods: the Collectivization[21], lasting from the division of the country in 1954 up to early 1980s, and the Renovation, from the issuance of liberalization policies in 1980s onward.

4.4.1. Social Stratification

Following the defeat of the French in Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Vietnam was divided into two parts at the 17th latitude. Northern Vietnam – the Democratic Republic of Vietnam – was under the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party. In response to the highly-concentrated land holding throughout Northern Vietnam, land reform was carried out soon after the achievement of national independence. Land from the landlords and rich farmers was confiscated and redistributed to poor and landless peasants. This reflected a strong commitment of the government in adapting socialism, dismantling exploitative class structure and supporting poor peasants (Bhaduri, 1982: 34).

However, the private ownership of land was brief with collectivized farming being carried out in Northern Vietnam from the late 1950s and throughout the country as a whole from 1975 until the 1980s (Bhaduri, 1982: 35-38; Kerkvliet, 1995: 68). Under the

[21] The Collectivization had been initiated in Northern Vietnam since the division of the country in 1954 and expanded to the whole country since the reunification of the country in 1975.

collectivized farming, the peasant households pooled their paddy field, draught animals, and labor and worked together to raise crops and livestock. Only five per cent of the cooperative's land was set for private use. The independent role of the household was replaced by the new structure of cooperatives and production brigades. The villagers were organized into production brigades which made up the cooperatives. The cooperatives were often managed by a committee typically led by Communist Party members (Kerkvliet, 2003: 40). Initially, the cooperatives were rather small in scale, covering households in a single village but the size of cooperatives grew quickly to incorporate several villages enabling them to adopt large-scale specialized production and the use of modern technologies. The members of cooperatives were paid in rice and other faming products according to formulas which took into consideration the amount and quality of work the person did, the need to assure everyone had enough to eat, and the need to prevent large inequalities in living standard (Kervliet, 2003: 40). By the end of the 1960s, the cooperatives were established throughout the Northern Vietnam covering about 76 per cent of total paddy field and 86 per cent of total number of households (Ha, 1997: 103).

Following an initial success in the early 1960s when the cooperatives were small and mainly organized among extended families and close neighbors (Kerkvliet, 1995: 68), collectivization policies faced many complaints and opposition from the villagers. During the American war, the opposition was unobtrusive, perhaps because people largely believed that collectivized production was the most suitable system for the war efforts, and people tried as best as possible to achieve the sacred goal: liberation of the country. However, the post-war period experienced considerable objection of villagers on a large scale. Evidence of villagers' objections was reflected through the poor performance of farming practices: land was left unplanted, animals and tools were not well cared for; and the low productive

yield in cooperative land which was less than half of that in private plots. It was common that everybody tried to 'gain as many work points as possible with a minimum amount of labor' (Kerkvliet, 1995: 69). By the 1970s, many farmers derived about 60-70 per cent of their actual income from their privately tended land which occupied just about 5 per cent of total paddy fields. Many cooperatives contracted selected parts of cooperative production to the households, often referred as 'sneaky contracts'. As long as the production improved, the local authorities 'turned a blind eye or even encouraged' these modifications (Kerkvliet, 1995: 69).

During this period of time, while people's income from the agricultural sector was relatively equal, the rural population was to a considerable extent differentiated in political terms (Tran, 2004a: 136). The differentiation was reflected through the power that the local authorities possessed in relation to the ordinary people. Given the dominant role of the cooperative, mass organization, local government and party in managing aspects of people lives, the unequal power relations between local officials and peasants were apparent (Tran and Nguyen, 1995: 210). In a study of a village in Northern Vietnam, Tran (2004a: 137) found that the control of the cooperative over subsistence activities, on which the villagers depended for their welfare, created favorable conditions for the abuse of power by officials. Through either privileges or corruption, the officials were able to benefit from the co-operative system. As a result, the leaders of grass-roots-level political organizations formed the most powerful group in the villages in this period of time (Tran,2004a: 137).

Later on, the rising opposition to Collectivization in late 1970s provoked a fundamental change not only about the management of agricultural production, but also about the idea of centrally planned and controlled economy. Initially, a series of decisions by the Party and government were issued between 1979 and 1981 to legitimize individual

household's farming (Kerkvliet, 1995: 70), of which, the most important was the Directive 100/CT/TW of the Party's Central Committee. This allowed cooperatives to assign unused land to individual household through 'production contract' [khoan san pham]. Although Directive 100/CT/TW merely legalized the practices that had been done in villages, it marked an important step toward the economic liberalization – a key content of 'Renovation' (Tran, 2004a: 139). Further, in 1986, the Vietnamese authorities launched the 'Renovation' policy at the sixth National Congress of Communist Party legalizing the market economy in Vietnam in which private entrepreneurship was to be encouraged and private ownership of means of production was accepted. Then in 1988, the Party's Central Committee issued the Resolution No.10 which legitimized household contracts [khoan ho], allowed the cooperatives to distribute land to households for the term of fifteen years, while retaining the right to adjust land holding when demographic changes required. From that time on, households were free to decide on the procurement, production and marketing of their products while the cooperative's responsibilities were limited to selected tasks like irrigation maintenance, allocation of land or collection of tax (Kleinen J., 1999: 110; Tran, 2004a: 139).

The Renovation was further promoted in 1990s to facilitate the development of the market economy. Most notable were the implementation of Land law and grassroots democratization legislation. In 1993, the Land law was issued as a further step to economic liberalization. This law recognized the rights of households to sell, exchange, transfer, lease, inherit, and mortgage their land. This change was seen as 'the most radical and determined step toward establishing private land-use rights' (Hayami, 1994: 9). The acknowledgement of land use rights marked an important shift of Vietnam society from a centrally-planned system into a market economy.

While the issuance of Land law led to strong economic diversification and development, in certain areas, it also contributed to land concentration and thus social and economic differentiation (Nguyen, 2004: 271-272).

In 1997, resentment over of the local officials' corruption and abuse of power burst into social unrest and uprisings in some provinces (Kerkvliet, 2004: 17). In response to the problem, Vietnamese authorities implemented a series of grassroots democracy policies, which basically aimed to improve the accountability of local government, particularly at the commune level through involving people in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of local development activities. By its nature, it represented what could be called a CDD approach in that it involved the devolution of control and people's participation in local decision-making. The issuance of Grassroots democratization legislation had resulted in a series of significant changes in the local institutions, particularly the state-village relations (Hoang, 2007: 131; Kerkvliet, 2004: 17; Mattner, 2004: 122).

The Renovation policies, while giving people more freedom to develop their household's economies, created social differentiation on a large scale (Kleinen J., 1999: 155; Tran, 2004a: 140), characterized by two features: equality in agriculture sector was mainly attributed to the relatively equal distribution of land (Luong and Unger J., 1998: 66); while the source of inequality mainly came from the off-farm sector, which included jobs in the government sector (Kerkvliet, 1997: 65; Luong and Unger J., 1998: 66) where political position and entrepreneurship enabled some households to take advantage of non-farm activities (Luong and Unger J., 1998: 82). Households with political position, capital, skills and knowledge were more likely to succeed in taking advantage of opportunities created by the renovation process and left the resource-poor households far behind (Tran,

2004a: 158). Kleinen (1999: 151), in a study of a village in Northern Vietnam, found that this income differentiation significantly affected the local power relations. Extra wealth was used for maintaining good relationship with important officials, getting extra benefits from the fledgling 'free' market, and building the social networks in the village.

4.4.2. Community Autonomy and People's participation in local decision-making

Under agricultural collectivization from 1958 until 1980s, former village institutions were replaced by the structure of mass organizations, production brigades, cooperatives and local government under the leadership of the Commune Party Committee (Tran and Nguyen, 1995: 210). The autonomous role of the household economy was replaced by a new institution - the system of agriculture cooperative. The peasants were directly mobilized and controlled by the state bureaucracy, Communist Party, and various socio-political organizations under the Fatherland Front at local level (Kerkvliet, 2003: 40). The village was no longer an autonomous administrative entity as in past[22].

During this period, Vietnam adopted a centrally planned economy with a central bureaucracy allocating resources into what were seen as the priority areas of the national construction (Fforde and Vylder, 1996: 57). Development plans and projects at a grassroots level were planned and managed by higher-level authorities. At the local level, since the People's Council and the Fatherland Front of the communes remained formalistic, the local government and cooperatives controlled most aspects of people lives and production. The

---

[22] In the pre-colonial and colonial times, the village, particularly those in Northern Vietnam, was a relatively autonomous entity with powerful local institutions. The village Council of Notables served as the local court to adjudicate any disputes in the villages. The arbitration of disputes was done on the basis of village's convention [huong uoc] which comprised a set of rules, procedures and customs that regulated social relations as well as people's behaviors toward natural environment and resources, and collective action for disaster prevention and communal security (Bui, 2007:115-116; Gourou, 1955: 304; Shanks et al., 2003:25). This is reflected through such the adages as: 'the law of the emperor stops at the village gate' and 'the mountains are high and the emperor is far'.

cooperatives performed as 'supplier of materials, managing money, and marketing produce' and the role of the farmer in these matters was abolished (Tran and Nguyen, 1995: 210). In addition, mass organization, such as the Women's Union and the Youth Union, also played a key role in managing people. All these organizations were under the management and supervision of commune-level Party Committee (Tran and Nguyen, 1995: 210). As a result, in this period people's participation in local decision-making did not exist (To *et al.*, 2003: 90).

People's participation in local decision-making was started to be institutionalized by the Article 6 in the 1992 Constitution, which specified that the principle guiding the people's participation in governance of state bureaucracy of different levels is 'democratic centralism'. According to the Resolution of the Seventh Communist Party Congress, the 'centralism' aspect rests on the party's supervision of macroeconomic policies and actions to ensure their conformity to socialism principles. The 'democratic' aspect describes the freedom of individuals to participate in decisions through mechanisms of direct democracy, which are applied both to local communities and state agencies, and representative democracy though which elected representatives debate and reach consensus on matters of policy and direction. The 'Democratic' aspect also implies the power and responsibility devolved to local government authorities and sector agencies in the decision making process (Tran, 2004b: 140). In practice, 'democratic centralism' means while the lower administration levels might be consulted and invited to participate in policy formulation, the guiding rule is 'the part submitting to the whole, the minority yielding to the majority, lower ranks obeying higher ranks, and localities obeying the center' (Dixon, 2004: 17). Obviously, this rule makes the local authorities more attuned to the upper officials in the administrative apparatus than to the constituents below them (Mc Elwee and Ly, 2006: 7).

Up to the mid 1990s, the institutional structure at the local level – province, district or commune – was comprised of local government and non-governmental organizations grouped under the umbrella of the Fatherland Front (National Constitution, 1992). Local government here consisted of institutions identified in Vietnam's constitution as part of the political regime and responsible for implementing law and policies, including the Party Committee, the People's Committee, and the People's Council. While the Party Committee played the role of 'the force leading the State and Society', the People's Council and the People's Committee were legislative and executive bodies respectively (Kerkvliet, 2004: 3-8; National Constitution, 1992). Local organizations included mass organizations and civic organizations (Vasavakul, 2006: 13) while the village was not recognized as an administrative level and did not have the People's Council and the People's Committee though village-level party cells and units of mass organizations existed.

The People's Council at each level, as specified in 119th article 1992 Constitution, represents 'the will, aspiration, and mastery' of the local residents. In this sense, the People's Council is a legislative body that makes decisions about all key matters within its jurisdiction and monitors the implementation of the People's Committee, Court and Procurary. It is obliged to implement laws, policies, and resolutions of the councils at the upper levels and cannot issue resolutions and decisions that are contrary to the directions of higher levels. The members of the People's Council are nominated by the Fatherland Front and directly elected by the local people through secret ballot. The chair of the People's Council is often the secretary of the Party Committee at the same level and the Council maintains two accountability relationships: downwardly to its constituents and upwardly to the higher level councils (Kerkvliet, 2004: 7).

The People's Committee is the executive arm of the People's Council at that level

and has the role of implementing decisions of the higher level committees. The People's Committee also has a dual accountability relationship: horizontally to the People's Council at the same level, and vertically to the People's Committee at higher levels (Kerkvliet, 2004: 7). For instance, the People's Council's selection for chair and vice-chair of the People's Committee in a commune must be approved by the District People's Committee. The chair of the People's Committee is often the prominent member of the Party committee at the same level, and has considerable power over lower level government. 'The Chairman of the People's Committee can suspend or annul the wrong decisions of organs under the People's Committees and People's Councils of a lower rank; it can suspend wrong resolutions of People's Councils of a lower rank and at the same time propose to the People's Council at its own level to annul such resolutions' (Article 124 National Constitution). People's Committees are assisted by local offices of line agencies who are accountable to both the People's Committee and the corresponding offices at higher level.

Local organizations, organized under the umbrella of the Fatherland Front, comprise of two groups: mass organizations and civic organizations. Fatherland Front and Mass organizations, roughly defined as organizations being established for the purpose of mobilizing mass population to support The Party's policies, are considered an integral part of the political system. The mass organizations include: Vietnam Fatherland Front, Women's Union (WU), Farmers' Association (FA), Youth Union and Veterans' Association. Civic organizations consist of various types of groupings: union of associations, associations, issue-oriented organizations, and Community-based organizations. Overall, the civic organizations are more active in urban area and remain limited in rural area (Vasavakul, 2006: 13).

The reality of Vietnam in the 1990s highlighted the limitation of 'democratic

centralism'. This guiding principle failed to establish an accountable and transparent system of governance, especially at the commune level where the state-people interaction mainly takes place (Mattner, 2004: 123; Tran, 2004b: 141). The corruption and abuse of power by local officials caused rising resentment and discontent in the villages. The civil disturbance in Thaibinh province in 1997 was a well publicized example of corrupt local party members and officials (Mattner, 2004: 24). As this problem affected the legitimacy of the government and Communist Party, a change in local institutional setting appeared to become a pressing need (Tran, 2004b: 141).

Though many decentralization efforts were pursued in late 1990s, the system of governance remained relatively centralized. About 40 per cent of government expenditure was assigned to local levels, but it was primarily controlled by province level (Fritzen, 2002: 22). The Provincial People's Committee still controlled the ownership of land in the province, represented the State in enterprises with State participation, managed the establishment of units based on the guidelines for local line agencies, decided personnel issues of agencies under its authority, and ensured the training and re-training of district and commune officials. Only limited responsibilities were delegated to districts level, such as allowing them to organize their administrative services, and manage public services such as education, health care, sports and culture. However, decentralization had not reached the commune level. Communes did not raise their own revenue and mainly relied on the funding allocation from higher level government (Vasavakul, 2006: 10-11). It was commented by Fritzen (2006: 3) that the country still 'does not at present have an overarching, consistent decentralization policy' (p.3).

To improve the grassroots democracy and local governance, the government launched Decree 29/1998/ND_CP in 1998 and 79/2003/ND-CP in 2003 which promulgated

a range of measures to promote 'grassroots democracy' mainly at commune's level. Among the most important objective of this strategy was 'to make revenue, budgets and expenditure transparent and to enable citizens to oversee better local authorities' activities' (Kerkvliet, 2004: 17) or, in other words, to enhance the accountability of local governance. Grassroots democratization was intended to work through four mechanisms: the first mechanism being information sharing. Commune officials are obliged to provide adequate information about a range of issues, such as national laws and policies, commune development plans, the decisions of commune people's councils as well as commune budgets, land use plans, results of investigations against corrupt officials, and the issues of people's interest, to people. Information is to be disseminated in various forms including public meetings, written documents, public postings or public address systems.

The second mechanism refers to the work that must be directly approved by the people that include: public welfare works that require contributions from local residents; the raising and managing of funds; elaborating conventions, rules and order; and setting up boards to supervise construction projects. This decision-making can take place through public meetings or referendums. However, if the Commune People's Committee deems the majority decisions to be inconsistent with relevant laws, it can refer them to the District People's Committee for review. The third mechanism is consultation. Many local initiatives are required to be consulted by the people before they are decided by the commune authorities. These initiatives include: the drafting of local development plans; land use plans; and plans on the implementation of national programs on health, water and environment; the compensation for ground clearance; and the nomination of candidates to stand for Commune People's Council elections. The views of local residents are to be gathered through questionnaires, feedback boxes or public meetings. The last mechanism is

supervision: local issues which are "to be supervised and inspected by the people", include the commune budget, land management, results of investigations against corrupt officials and social services. This also applies to the general activities of the people's committee and the implementation of its decisions. People's supervision is carried out through the establishment of people's inspection boards or through mass organizations. In addition, residents are entitled to make proposals and denunciation in accordance with the provision of law. People also are entitled to request local officials to clarify issues they suspect (Government of Vietnam, 1998: 2-7).

By issuing the grassroots democratization legislation, the government tried to enhance the democratic decentralization process at the grassroots level – especially the commune level. The control over decision-making and monitoring of commune's projects and issues were partly devolved to the villages aiming at enhancing local democracy and downward accountability of the local officials – the power holders. Since participatory planning and information sharing is focused on the commune and village levels, the Commune People's Committee leaders are the crucial implementers of the democracy legislation (Fritzen, 2003: 17).

To discuss the success of grassroots democratization legislation, this Chapter relies on Beutz's (2003: 388) view of democracy, which holds that 'the essential function of democracy is the creation and implementation of mechanisms that allow the citizens to hold the decision-makers accountable'. Therefore, the success of local democracy is a function of the effectiveness of mechanisms through which people can sanction the local power holders – in this case the commune government. Grassroots democratization legislation set up four mechanisms through which commune-level officials can be sanctioned: monitoring by commune people's council, monitoring by local organizations, monitoring by local

people through grievance procedures, and public reporting in Village Meetings.

According to Law on the Organization of People's Council and People's Committee, the People's Council is obliged to make decisions about key matters concerning local development and monitor the implementation of People's Committee, the People's Court and People's Procuracy at the same level. At the Commune level, a key obligation of Commune People's Council is to monitor the implementation of People's Committee. However, this institutional sanctioning ability does not necessarily reflect the actual ability of People's Council to sanction the local officials. In practice, as People's Councils meet so infrequently (often just two four-day sessions annually) (Mc Elwee and Ly, 2006: 23), they have very limited time for serious elaboration and debate and, therefore, often 'govern primarily by endorsing whatever is put before them' (Kerkvliet, 2004: 8) and performed their duties in a formalistic manner (Nguyen V. Sau and Ho V. Thong cited by Mc Elwee and Ly, 2006: 24). Similarly, Fritzen (2006: 10) claims that the executive branch of Vietnam government tended to overbear the legislative and judicial branches. Obviously, weak representative functions of People's Council should adversely affect democratic decentralization.

The 9th article 1992 Constitution states 'The Vietnam Fatherland Front and its member organizations ... ensure the strict observance of the Constitution and the law, and supervise the activity of State organs, elected representatives, and State officials and employees'. So, the concern here is how effectively the local organizations supervise state organs, elected representatives and state officials. Norlund *et al.* (2006: 95) found that mass organizations and civic organizations do not see holding the government accountable as their main objective. In recent years, though the opportunities for local organizations to influence the local government through various channels were opening, it had not been

exploited (p.95). For now, the interactions between local organizations and the State are mainly characterized by cooperation rather than supervision. In an ethnographic study in a Northern village, Tran Thi Thu Trang (2004b: 146) found that mass organizations were more the instruments of top-down control, rather than the representatives of the interest groups. Overall, though mass organizations play an important role in rural development and poverty reduction, their performance in supervising local government is limited.

Monitoring by individuals through complaints and denunciations likewise, is difficult for a number of reasons. As there is currently no legal framework ensuring access to public information, people may not be well-informed about the policies and activities implemented in the local area (Mc Elwee and Ly, 2006: 18). Also, effective monitoring requires professional knowledge and skills that people are unlikely to possess. Although in principle, complaints and denunciations [khieu nai va to cao] provide an avenue to local democracy[23], in practice they remain formalistic due to the weakness of complaint mechanism (Mc Elwee and Ly, 2006: 20; Tran, 2004b: 146-47). According to the Law on Complaints and Denunciations, complaints must be lodged first with the office against which they are directed, not to higher offices. This also is not independent enough to play a referee role between complainants and the defendants, to the extent that the commune legal officer processes the complaints of people in the commune. Since this position is part of Commune People's Committee, local people do not see him/her as an independent ombudsman. Further, as the law considers anonymous denunciation invalid, therefore the fear of reprisal makes people reluctant to complain about government officials.

Village Meetings are devised to give people the opportunities to be informed, to discuss, to comment and to make decisions on a wide range of local issues. Two times a

[23] Law on Complaints and Denunciations

year, Village Meetings are held to disseminate important information and review activities of Commune's government, where activity reports and self-criticism statement by chairperson of People' Committee and People's Council are presented for people's discussion (Government of Vietnam, 1998: 2-7). In a study of local democracy in a community in Hoa Binh province, Tran (2004b: 134-44) found that cadres often invited only well-off villagers and exclude the poor for the reason that they are 'ignorant' and 'inarticulate'. Further, the meetings were often accompanied by a drink or meal which the poor could not afford. In addition, the unequal relationship within society based on gender, age, and wealth meant a predomination of wealthy men in these meetings. Finally, given the peasant's poor access to information, the cadres were able to manipulate the meetings and people were less likely to effectively query their leaders.

The problems and weaknesses highlighted above, though considerable, should not be taken as the total negation of the achievement of democratic decentralization efforts. Rather, they help understanding the localized nature of the decentralization in Vietnam. Fritzen (2006: 18) claims that strong local organizations and committed local government leadership, when being supported by grassroots democratization, could create significant change in local democracy. What emerges from this discussion is that the accountability of local government leaders is likely a significant factor affecting democracy at the grassroots level.

Following the reform policies in the 1980s and 1990s, the autonomy of the villages which was abolished in the Collectivization had been revitalized. The revival of village's autonomy is reflected in three significant changes. The introduction of Village Heads position significantly enhanced the village's autonomy, as they were directly elected by the villagers and served a dual role: as an outer-link between the villagers and the local

government authorities, and as a tool of self-management. For instance, they were responsible for disseminating essential information to people, mobilizing people, adjudicating disputes and ensuring security, convening village meetings to discuss local issues, and organizing labor for the maintenance of village infrastructure (Government of Vietnam, 1998: 8-9). Second was the reinstatement of village conventions [huong uoc]. This process, initiated in the early 1990s and further promoted by Grassroots democratization legislation since 1998, provided the basis for village self-management. However, it is noteworthy that while the ancient form of village conventions served as the 'charter' for the administration of villages as administrative units, the village conventions today are more a social code of practice governing people's behavior. The grassroots democratization legislation also institutionalized different levels of control of the villages over a series of local development issues through ensuring their rights to be informed, to discuss, to decide and to monitor them (Government of Vietnam, 1998: 2-7; Shanks et. al, 2003: 27). In short, villages now have a relatively strong voice in policies and activities affecting their own development.

Further, people's participation in local decision-making was also promoted, at least in principle. Since the implementation of renovation policies, especially the Grassroots Democratization legislation, people's participation in local decision-making has been to a considerable extent promoted. People are now involved in, at least in principle, all decisions affecting their lives. Depending on the nature of the issue of concern, people's participation is mobilized at different level: information sharing, consultation, decision-making, and supervision. However, at practical level, the meaningful people's participation in the local decision-making may be problematic for a number of reasons of which the downward accountability of the local governance is one of the most important.

This section examines the context of the CDD approach in Vietnam with an emphasis on the three themes: social stratification, community control and people's participation in local decision-making. The discussion highlights two key points with important implications for the CDD approach. On one hand, the existing institutional framework in Vietnam features a democratic decentralization system at grassroots level which is characterized by the increased community control over local issues and people's participation in local decision-making, at least in principle. This forms a relatively 'benign' environment for the CDD approach. On the other hand, the stratification between the villagers is increasing, and challenges the key assumption of the CDD approach seeing community as a homogeneous entity. This suggests that elite capture can be a potential threat in the CDD approach in Vietnam and attention to this factor is of importance in this development approach. Further, the localized nature of grassroots democracy in the country may also affect the effectiveness of the CDD initiatives.

4.5. The Chiase Program

Chiase is a poverty reduction program implemented by Vietnamese Government and supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The program was initiated in November 2003 and operated in 459 villages in three provinces of Quang Tri, Ha Giang and Yen Bai. The primary stakeholders in the Chiase are poor people and communities. The vision of the Chiase is 'a just and fair society where the villagers take part in decision-making: their needs, demands and aspirations gear the development of the local society. Resources for poverty alleviation are 'managed by the local community' (Chiase Program Document, 2003: 36). This vision shows a strong orientation to the CDD approach with the central role of local people and communities. The role that government and development agencies play is to respond to local needs and facilitate their demands. This vision of the Chiase also indicates that it can be seen as an

experiment of approach to poverty reduction at local level of the Vietnam CPRGS.

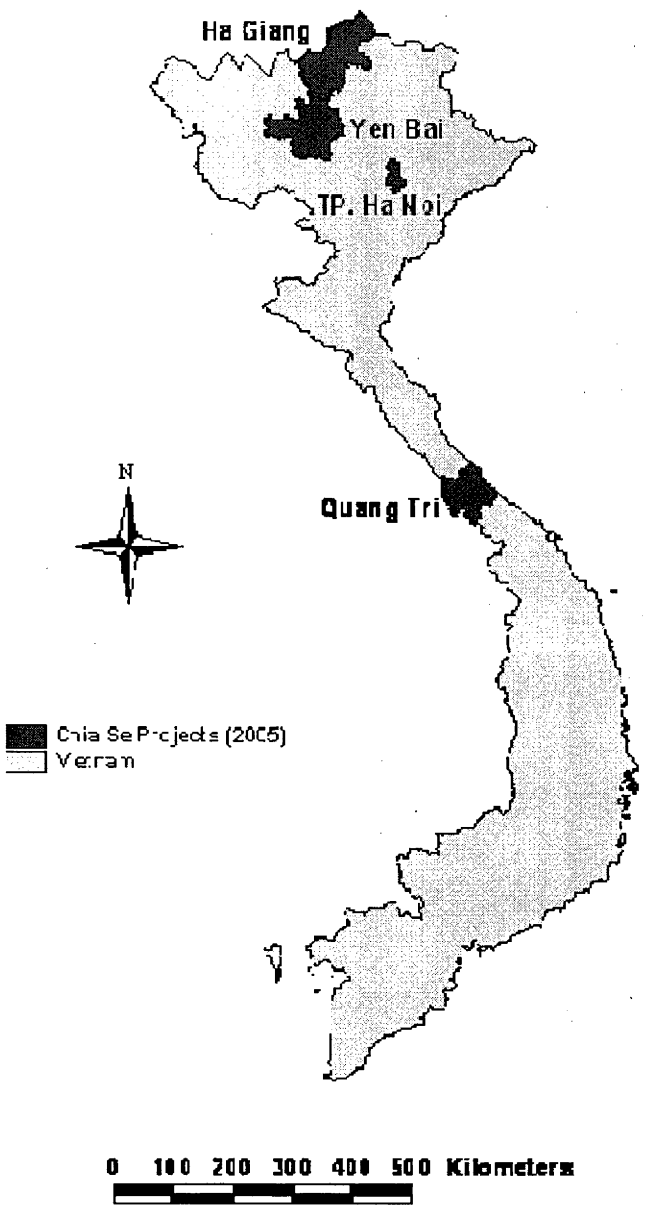
4.5.1. The Chiase Program Principles

Chiase adopts a CDD approach with all of its defining features[24]. The control over decision-making and resources for development is given to the local communities. All key decisions regarding the planning, implementation, and monitoring of village development activities are made by Village Meeting through broad-based people's participation. The operation of the Chiase program at village level is based on the Local Planning and Management for Development (LPMD) cycle. In guiding the planning and management of village activities, the Chiase project has six principles: decentralization and local involvement, equality and equity, transparency and accountability, a poverty focus, sustainability, and multi-sector support. 'Decentralization and local involvement' are an underlying strategy of the Chiase. In this program, the villagers are involved in decision-making regarding the planning and management of all activities financed by the Local Development Fund. The role of the program staff is to support and facilitate this involvement.

[24] The defining characteristics of the CDD approach are discussed in chapter Three.

Map 1: Map of Vietnam

Map 2: Location of the Chiase Program



'Equality and equity' mean the equal opportunities for all groups of people. Given that women and very poor families often have fewer opportunities to take part in and benefit from development initiatives, interventions should be done to ensure that they have equal access to opportunities as other advantaged groups. 'Accountability and transparency' ensure that people are given adequate access to information about the program and the use of LDF. 'Poverty in focus' ensures that all the Chiase activities are directed to poverty reduction. It is noteworthy that, the Chiase program adopted two 'poverty targeting' mechanisms during two periods 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. In the first phase, the local community was solely responsible for defining eligibility and selecting beneficiaries through majority voting. In the second phase, the program involved the local government in identifying 'poor' households based on national criteria[25], and involved the community in selecting beneficiaries for particular activities from the pre-defined list of 'poor' households. The problems associated with these targeting mechanisms are discussed in details in Chapter Six. Sustainability ensures that the Chiase activities shall not only cover the immediate needs of the villagers, but should have sustained effects. The development initiated by the Local Development Funds shall also benefit coming generations.

Finally, 'multi-sector support' reflects the conception that poverty is a complex issue that relates to many aspects in people's living situation. Therefore, the Chiase activities should attack multiple aspects of poverty. Specifically, the project provides supports in six sectors: education, including adult education; health and sanitation; infrastructure; production including income generating activities; natural resources management; and social security to support cases of disability, prolonged illness, and social

[25] Details about the national poverty line are presented in Box 4.1.

and natural disasters.

4.5.2. The Chiase Program Structure and Responsibility

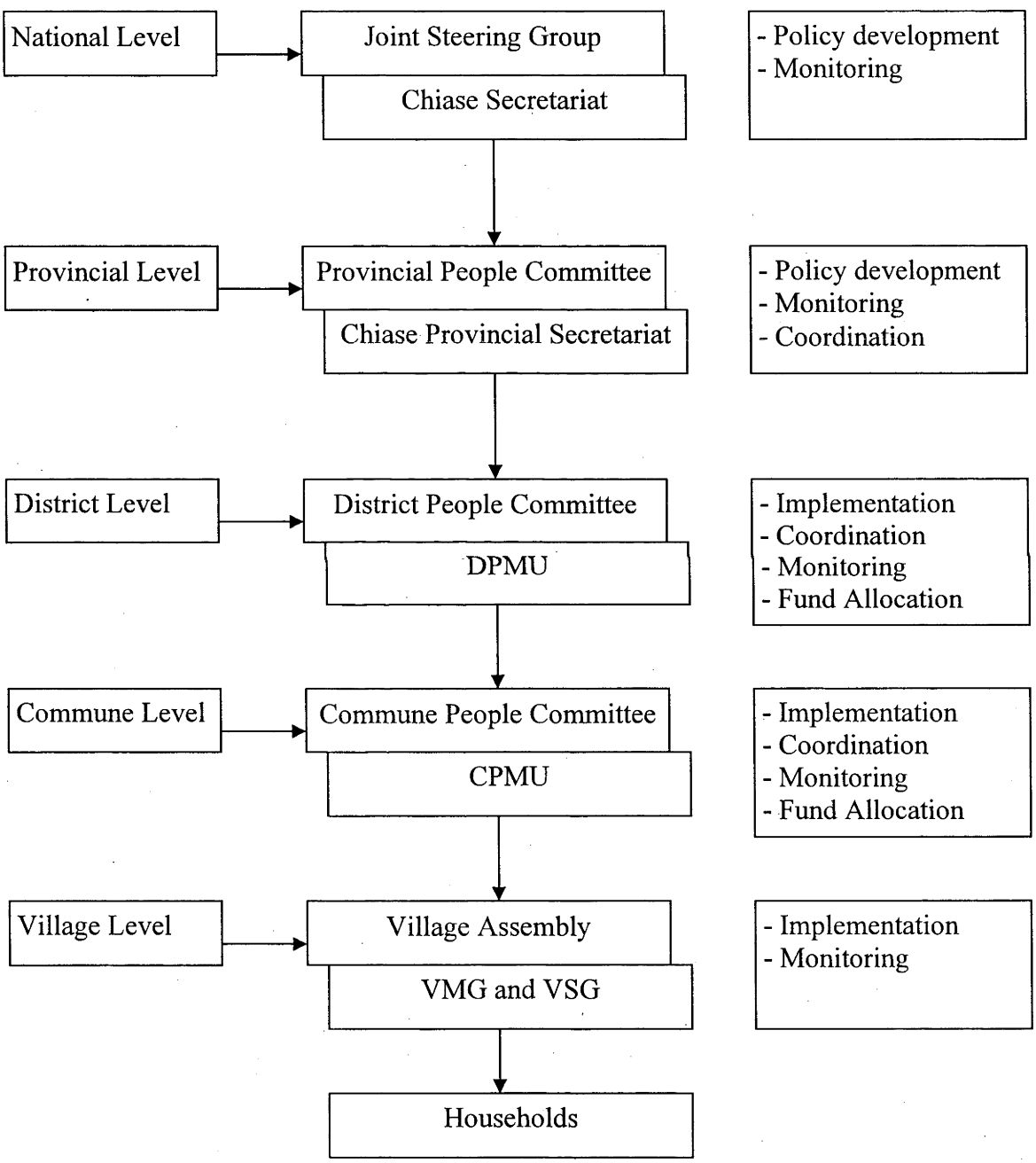
The Chiase program is managed with a structure of strategic oversight groups and implementing units duplicated at national, provincial, district, commune and village levels. A Joint Steering Group (JSG) is the "lead-institution" which brings together key ministries and other national institutions relevant for the Chiase program as well as representatives from the provinces in which the program is implemented. The JSG meets periodically to discuss program implementation, including monitoring progress, providing strategic guidance, as well as to draw out lessons from the experiences that are relevant for the development of poverty alleviation policies. There is a Chiase Secretariat as an executive body responsible for monitoring, collating and summarizing reports and aggregating accounts from the different provincial projects for the JSG. It also provides coordination between the different Chiase provincial projects and distils learning from received reports and shares these within the Chiase Program. At provincial level, the projects are implemented under the supervision of the Provincial People's Committees (PPC). This is guided by the Provincial Project Agreement between the PPC and SIDA. The Provincial Poverty Alleviation Steering Committee monitors the implementation of the local project in relation to the project document and the overall provincial development frameworks. This Provincial Steering Committee meets every quarter to discuss issues emerged, but has no direct management role. There is a secretariat at provincial level to collate reports, and accounts from district projects, and to prepare the reports for the provincial Steering Committee and the Chiase Secretariat at national level. They are are also responsible for drawing lessons from the implementation of the program and circulates them within the program.

At a district level, the District People's Committee (DPC) is supported by a District Project Management Unit (DPMU) which is led by the chairman of the DPC and responsible for facilitating and supporting local planning, implementation and monitoring of poverty alleviation activities in the district; and accounting for resources allocated to the district for these activities. The DPMU is also responsible for planning and implementing district (inter-commune) activities. The DPMU is under the direct supervision of the DPC. Relevant district departments second their staff to work as full time staff in the DPMU. The DPMU is divided into two sections: Financial and Program Management section, and Capacity Building and Facilitation. The first is in charge of processing and collating local development plans, reports and accounts, and managing the Chiase's Management Information System; and the second is in charge of supporting planning, implementation and capacity building at the commune and village levels. At commune level, the Commune People's Committee (CPC) creates a Commune Project Management Unit (CPMU) which is led by the Chairman of the CPC and responsible for facilitating and supporting local planning, management and monitoring of poverty alleviation activities in the commune, and accounting for resources allocated to villages and households for these activities. The CPMU is also in charge of planning and implementing commune (inter-village) activities. The CPMU is under the direct supervision of the CPC. It is at the commune level, that the day-to-day implementation of the program is enforced.

Finally, at the village level, the Village Meeting is the main consultative and decision making body regarding planning, implementing and funding of village development activities. For day-to-day management of activities each village selects a Village Management Group which is in charge of leading the local planning process, implementing activities, and reporting to the village as well as higher levels of

management. The village also elects a Supervisory Group which is responsible for supervising the implementation of village activities. The management structure is presented in Diagram 4.1.

Diagram 4.1: Program Structure and Responsibility



Source: Chiase Program Document, 2003.

4.5.3. The Local Planning and Management for Development Cycle

In the Chiase program, the planning and management of development activities are carried out according to the guidelines of the Local Planning and Management for Development (LPMD) cycle which is a series of steps a village under this program follows. The time it takes from the initiation of the first step to the completion of the last step is called a "LPMD Cycle" that is often implemented on a yearly basis. In the Chiase program, each village receives support for four consecutive LPMD cycles. The stages for each cycle are: introduction of the Program and analysis of the socio-economic situation of the village; formulation of village development plans and list of annual priority activities; preparation of detailed proposal for annual priority activities; implementation and monitoring of priority activities; and review and reporting about the activities implemented. The steps and corresponding tasks in a LPMD cycle are presented in Table 4.3.

Initially, there is an introduction step that is done at both commune and village levels. Meetings are held by the CPMU to inform the village representatives in the commune about the Chiase program, its visions, objectives, principle, methods, and regulations. Introductory meetings are then held in each village with the election of the Village Management Group (VMG) and Village Supervisory Group (VSG). In these meetings, key information about the program's visions, objectives, principle, methods, and regulations is disseminated, and an agreement on the fund allocation to each village is signed. The VMG and VSG are directly elected by the villagers through majority votes and responsible for implementing and supervising all village activities approved by the village meeting. These bodies also serve as a link between the CPMU and the village inhabitants. In village meetings, with the support of the CPMU, the villagers are requested to analyze the socio-economic situations prevailing in the locality.

Table 4.3: Steps of the LPMD Cycle in the Chiase Program

Task	Implementing Body	Supporting Body
A. Introduction (first year only)		
A1. Introduction Meeting	CPMU	
A2. Election of VMG and VSG	Village Meeting	CPMU
A3. Village Situation Analysis	Village Meeting	CPMU+VMG
B. Village development planning		
B1. Preparation of Village Vision	Village Meeting	VMG+CPMU
B2. Preparation of Village Development Plan	Village Meeting	VMG+CPMU
B3. Preparation of the annual activities list	Village Meeting	VMG+CPMU
B4. Review the annual activities list	VMG +CPMU	
B5. Approval of the annual activities list and fund release to the CPMU account.	DPMU	
C. Activity preparations		
C1. Detailed activity proposal preparation	Activity owners + VMG	CPMU
C2. Approval of activity proposal	Village Meeting	VMG+CPMU
C3. Approval of activities proposal by CPMU	CPMU	
C4. Sub-contracting	VMG	CPMU
C5. Fund disbursement to activities owners.	CPMU	
D. Activity implementation		
D1. Activity implementation and monitoring	VMG+CPMU	
D2. Submission of accounting documents to the CPMU	VMG	CPMU
D3. Evaluation of activities	VSG	
E. Annual review	Village Meeting	VMG+CPMU

Source: Chiase Program Field Manual, 2005.

The Second step – village planning – comprises five tasks: the preparation of the vision, the preparation of the village development plan, the preparation of annual list of activities, a review the annual activity list, and the approval of annual activities. The first three tasks are done by local people with the facilitation of the CPMU. The village vision and development plan, developed in the first LPMD, covers the period of about four to five

years and forms the basis for the selection of annual activities to be implemented in the planning year. The annual activity list must contain, for each proposed activity, the following: activity name, sector, regulation, list of beneficiary households, total number of beneficiaries, number of beneficiaries belonging to the poor group, number of beneficiaries who are women, estimated total cost, starting time, and estimated duration. The activities funded by the Chiase mainly include: provision of pigs, cows and other productive assets for poor households, house repairs for poor households, loans borrowed from a village revolving fund for various purposes; organization of training courses, health care activities; and construction of community centers, kindergartens, clinics, culverts, earthen roads and irrigation systems. After the annual list of activities is finalized by the villagers, it then will be reviewed by the CPMU and approved by the DPMU.

Third, is an 'activity preparation' step which includes five tasks: preparation of activity proposal, approval of activity proposal by the Village Meeting, approval of activity proposal by the CPMU, sub-contracting, and fund disbursement. Activity proposals are prepared by the villagers and the VMG with the support of the CPMU. They are to be approved by the Village Meeting and the CPMU before any sub-contracting and funds disbursement is to be carried out by the VMG and CPMU.

Fourth step – 'activity implementation' - consisting of three tasks: implementation and monitoring, submission of accounting documents to the CPMU, and evaluation of activities. The village, led by their VMG and supported by the CPMU, is in charge of organizing the implementation of activities, using its own resources or engaging outsiders, depending on the nature of each activity. The VMG is responsible for submitting all related documents to the CPMU while the VSG is in charge of evaluating all activities in terms of quality and efficiency.

Finally, by the end of each LPMD, the CPMU is to assist the villages in organizing meetings to review and evaluate all activities implemented during that LPMD cycle in order to identify successes and weaknesses. This enables the villages to revalidate, or if necessary, update their vision and development plans. Essential questions to be addressed in the meetings are the objectives and principles of the Chiase program and the responsibilities of relevant stakeholders.

For these steps it can be seen that people's participation is aimed at being mobilized in all steps in LPMD, including situation analysis, planning, preparation, implementation, and review of activities. People's participation is mobilized at decision-making level, either directly or through representative bodies. People directly control the situation analysis, planning, preparation, and review stages through Village Meetings. The implementation of village activities is carried out by the VMG and VSG – the representatives elected by the villagers in the first LPMD cycle. People's participation in all stages of the LPMD is facilitated by the CPMU. It is the LPMD cycle which provides the framework for people's participation in decision-making in the Chiase reflecting the democratic decentralization nature of this program.

4.5.4. Analysis of Democratic Decentralization in the Chiase Program

Chiase is a decentralization system which is characterized by the transfer of control over decision-making and resources to local levels: district, commune and village. The District Development Fund, which accounts for five per cent of LDF, is managed by the DPMU and representatives of CPMUs within its jurisdiction. The Commune Development Fund, which makes up fifteen per cent of LDF, is under control of the CPMU and representatives from its member villages. The Village Development Fund (VDF), which makes up eighty per cent of LDF, is controlled by village residents and their representative bodies: VMG and VSG. The Chiase program features a democratic decentralization system as the decentralized power is either exercised by the locally-elected body or directly exercised by the villagers. The expected outcome of the decentralization strategy is stated as 'a demand-driven process in which planning and implementation processes are based on expressed local aspirations and needs' and 'resources for poverty alleviation are available and managed by local communities and local people' (Chiase Program Document, 2003). In other words, the decentralization strategy in this program aims at promoting participation of 'local communities and local people' in such a way that it 'builds on, and strengthens the capacities of local communities to improve their livelihoods'. In the Chiase, the VDF is not only the largest share of LDF (80 per cent) but also the one whose management is decentralized to the largest extent with people's participation being promoted at the decision-making level. Therefore, to understand the effectiveness of the decentralization in this program and identify its potential factors, this section focuses on the institutional arrangement governing the VDF and village activities.

The analysis of the institutional arrangement governing the VDF in the Chiase program is based on Agrawal and Ribot's framework (1999: 474-477), which involves

three key dimensions: actors, distribution of power, and accountability relations (see Chapter Three). These dimensions of decentralization are reflected through the roles, rights, and responsibilities of different power holders involved in the Local Planning and Management for Development cycle (LPMD). The actors involving in the control of VDF comprise: the Village Meeting as a collective actor, the VMG, the VSG, and the CPMU. These actors hold different sets of decision-making power and are subject to a different accountability relations.

The Distribution of Power among Local Actors

In the Chiase, a number of general rules are set up as a framework for the management of development funds at the local level rather than a defining strait-jacket. They create a domain of relatively autonomous decision-making in which local actors can operate. The rules of the Chiase comprise four groups: principles of support, sectors of support, regulations on administrative and financial management, and poverty targeting policies. Except for the poverty targeting rules being amended since 2006, all other groups of rules remained consistent during the implementation of the program. First, the program has six support principles, which guide the planning and management of all activities. Further, the program activities must be confined in six sectors of support which comprise: education, health and sanitation, infrastructure, production, natural resources management, and social security[26]. In addition, the regulations on administrative and financial management mainly focus on the accounting and auditing system, reporting responsibilities, and procedures for procurement and disbursement. Finally, poverty targeting policies specify the roles and tasks of the local government and community in formulating poverty criteria, assessing the eligibility and implementing the benefit delivery. These four groups of rules create the framework in which, different sets of decision making

[26] The elaboration of program principles and sectors of support is presented in section 4.5.1.

authority are allocated to local actors, characterizing the decentralization in the Chiase program.

The management of village activities involves all four types of power identified by Agrawal and Ribot (1999: 476-477) which include the power to 'create rules' on the management of VDF, to 'make decisions' on the use of VDF, to 'implement and ensure compliance' to the program rules and village regulations, and to 'adjudicate disputes' arising from the effort to create rules and enforce compliance. These types of power are exercised by a number of actors: the Village Meeting, the VMG, the VSG, and the CPMU.

The power to 'create rules' is exclusively a privilege of the Village Meeting. At the commencement of the first LPMD cycle, the villages Assembly supported by the CPMU, forms a regulation on the management of VDF. This regulation is to be reviewed and revised in following LPMD cycles. The key information in the village regulation includes: types of support with corresponding level of funding, the procedures of fund disbursement, the amount of local contribution, the management of risks, the responsibilities of parties involving in the activities, and the terms of execution. One example of village regulation is presented in Appendix 7.

The power to 'make decisions' on the use of VDF is also solely exercised by the Village Meeting, mainly at three stages of the LPMD: planning, preparation and review. At planning stage of each LPMD cycle, the Village Meeting is to make decision on the village vision, village development plan (VDP), and annual activities list with corresponding beneficiaries. Later on, at preparation phase, the Village Meeting is to make decision on the approval of activities proposals which encompass the elaboration of the implementation and funding details of village activities. Finally, at Review stage, the Village Meeting is to evaluate the performance of village activities and may re-elect the VMG and VSG if their

performance is seen by people as unsatisfactory. All the decisions of Village Meeting are made through direct people's participation with the facilitation of the CPMU. Given the lack of information and capabilities of local people, the facilitation of the CPMU is crucial to the collective decision-making in all study villages.

The power to 'implement and ensure compliance' to decisions and rules are exercised by the three actors: the VMG, the VSG, and the CPMU. The VMG is responsible for implementing and supporting all collective and individual activities in the village. Specifically, the VMG is to facilitate village planning, allocate specific tasks to villagers, support and monitor individual activities, directly implement collective activities, receive accounting documents and reports from people, aggregate them and report to the VSG, the Village Meeting, and the CPMU. The VSG is responsible for monitoring the implementation of all Chiase activities in the village. At the end of implementation phase, the VSG is obliged to evaluate each VDF-funded village activity in terms of quality and efficiency. The VSG also has the right to reject the official closure of any activity file in those cases they believe that, the quality and efficiency are not satisfied. Furthermore, the VSG can decline its final approval if financial matters are not handled correctly. The CPMU is in charge of introducing information about the Chiase program to people, facilitating the planning and implementation of village activities, and ensuring the compliance of village activities to program rules. Specifically, at planning stage, the CPMU is to disseminate information about the Chiase, facilitate village planning, and review the annual plan of the village against the Chiase rules before sending them to the DPMU for approval. At preparation stage, the CPMU is to support the preparation and provide approval of activity proposals. At implementation stage, the CPMU is to work in partnership with the VMG, to directly manage and monitor all village activities. At review

stage, the CPMU is to support local people in evaluating activities done in that LPMD cycle.

Finally, power to adjudicate the disputes arising from making rules and enforcing compliance rests with the Village Meeting. Any dispute arising from the planning and implementation of village activities is to be settled by the Village Meeting. Next section focuses on the characteristics of actors controlling the VDF in the Chiase program.

The Actors in the Decentralization

The actors involved in the management of the VDF and village activities can be indentified by looking at the roles and tasks of different development partners specified in the LPMD cycle. They include three groups of actors whose powers are discussed in previous section. The most important decision maker is the Village Meeting which is a collective actor whose decisions are made through direct people's participation. All villagers over eighteen years old are entitled to join Village Meeting. The villages often seek consensus before making decision. However, where the consensus cannot be reached, decisions are made based on majority voting. Obviously, the performance of the Village Meeting is considerably dependent on the extent to which meaningful participation is achieved.

The second group of actor includes the VMG and VSG – the elected representatives of the local residents. The VMG is comprised of three members and the VSG of two members democratically elected by the villagers. These groups may be reelected at the end of each LPMD cycle if required by the local people. A quota system is applied to ensure that each VMG includes a female member and a member belonging to the 'poor' group. In the study villages, the members of the VMGs and VSGs are mostly the leaders of local organization branches in the villages or the village Head. The main barrier to the function

of the VMGs and VSGs was the lack of technical skills and information about government procedures as well as service provides which made them, to a considerable extent, dependent on the CPMU staff.

The last group of actors is the commune project management unit (CPMU). This group includes a director, a vice-director, a secretary, an accountant, and two facilitators. The staff of the CPMU are recruited and appointed by the Commune People's Committee (CPC). The director of this group is concurrently the Chairman of the CPC. In principle, the performance of the CPMU is monitored by the DPMU and the commune CPC. However, as the director of the CPMU is concurrently the chairman of commune CPC, the monitoring by commune CPC is just superficial. Because of long time involvement in central planning bureaucracy system, the leaders of the CPMU often have limited knowledge, skill, motivation and experience of participatory development.

The Accountability Mechanisms

The local actors in the Chiase program - the Village Meeting, VMG, VSG and CPMU are held accountable by a number of accountability relations. As these local actors control the decentralized power on behalf of the local people, their downward accountability is crucial for the effectiveness of decentralization. This section aims to assess the effectiveness of accountability relations controlling these actors with emphasis on their downward accountability.

First, the Village Meeting – the most important decision-maker in the Chiase - is upwardly accountable to the CPMU and DPMU for the compliance of their decision-making to the program rules. The accountability of the Village Meeting is ensured through the review of annual plan and activity proposal by the CPMU, and the system of reporting, auditing, and evaluation. As village decisions are made on participatory basis, downward

accountability of Village Meeting is automatically achieved.

Second, the VMG and the VSG, on behalf of the village residents exercise the power to 'implement and ensure compliance' to the program regulations. The VMG is downwardly accountable to their constituents for the implementation of village activities and the support given to people, and the VSG is downwardly accountable to the constituents for the monitoring of village activities. The downward accountability of these two groups is enforced through two formal mechanisms: election and the village meeting. The democratic election where people can vote and are entitled to contest for office on the basis of a simple majority vote, provides a strong tool for local people to sanction leaders. The performance of the VMG and VSG, who are elected at the beginning of the implementation of the Chiase, are reviewed and assessed at the end of each LPMD cycle. The villagers can sanction unaccountable VMG and VSG members by calling for the re-election of these positions. Local people can also hold the leaders accountable through the meetings organized along the steps of LPMD cycle. In these meetings, the constituents can question and demand explanations for the past actions of the leaders. This accountability mechanism supplements the mechanism of election and constitutes a specific and timely constraint on the arbitrary use of power by the VMG and VSG. The village meeting mechanism effectively provides a refining tool to redress the weaknesses of election which have been highlighted in theory of accountability (Ackerman, 2005: 7; Mulgan and Uhr, 2000: 3): the information asymmetry between villagers and local leaders; the time-lag of sanction; the scope of decisions made may be too small to stimulate a change of leader; and there is not always more than one viable candidate running for a particular position. Moreover, since the VMG and VSG are selected among the local villagers, there is also an informal accountability mechanism which is maintained through the day-to-day meetings.

To the local leaders, this mechanism is also important. It is likely that the above-mentioned mechanisms are sufficiently effective to enforce the downward accountability of these two groups of local leaders.

The VMG is also horizontally accountable to the VSG for the fiscal regularity and quality of the village activities. This accountability relation is enforced through the VSG's monitoring and evaluation of all VDF-funded activities. In addition, both the VMG and VSG are also upwardly accountable to the CPMU for accurate record keeping, reporting and enforcement of the general rules of the program. This upward accountability is, to a certain extent, ensured as the CPMU works in partnership with the local communities in all activities and closely oversees the performance of the VMG and VSG.

Finally, the CPMU is also subject to a number of accountability relations. It is upwardly accountable to the DPMU for timely and accurate record keeping, accounting, reporting, and the conformity of village decisions to the general rules of the program. Its upward accountability is enforced through the system of reporting, auditing, evaluation and the oversight of the DPMU. Specifically, the DPMU is obliged to review all village development plans and annual activity list which had been prepared by the villages and the CPMUs. In addition, mid-term evaluation and audit are important in holding the CPMU accountable to the program rules and regulations. The CPMU is also required to submit progress report every month. Therefore, it is likely that the CPMU attached a great importance to the orders and requirement of the DPMU, and the upward accountability of the CPMU is relatively ensured.

On the other hand, the downward accountability of the CPMU is more problematic. In principle, the CPMU can be held downwardly accountable to the constituents by both accountability mechanisms created by the grassroots democratization legislation and by

mechanisms created by the Chiase program. As specified in the grassroots democratization legislation, the accountability of this group can be enforced through a number of mechanisms: monitoring by the local People Council, monitoring by the local organizations, monitoring by people through complaint and denunciation, and monitoring through village meetings. However, in reality, as discussed in previous section, the implementation of these mechanisms is just superficial and less effective due to a number of reasons[27]. This was also the case for the communities under this study: the local People's Council and local organizations did not have any specific activities aiming at monitoring the local government; local people did not exercise the right of making 'complaint and denunciation'; and the semi-annual village meetings were just information dissemination sessions without extensive discussion about the accountability of the local government.

Therefore, the downward accountability of the CPMU in the Chiase was mainly enforced through the village meetings along the LPMD cycle of this program. However, while these meetings, in principle, allowed the local communities to sanction the CPMU by demanding the explanation for its past actions, their effectiveness in ensuring downward accountability of this local actor was limited. The potential sanction in the form of question asked in village meetings is much less severe as compared to the sanction of the DPMU if the requirement for upward accountability is not met which can be the dismissal, delay of promotion, or criticisms of the lower-level staff. Thus, the CPMU is likely to prioritize the upward accountability relations when there is a contradiction between downward and upward accountability, which, unfortunately, is not unlikely in development practice.

Theories of accountability (see Chapter Three) show that downward accountability

---

[27] The effectiveness of the accountability mechanisms created by the grassroots democracy legislations is discussed section 4.4.

of a public actor can be characterized by the extent to which it promotes people's participation in public decision-making and the implementation of the decisions. At the same time, upward accountability upholds the timely and accurate reports, accounting, and the conformity to the program rules and regulations. By its nature, the participatory processes often take time and result in unpredictable outputs that leave the CPMU vulnerable to criticism by upper level for inefficient planning, low quality of implementation, and ineffective enforcement of program provisions. Thus, the weaker sanction by village meeting may result in a disincentive for the CPMU in promoting people's participation, or in other words, be downwardly accountable[28]. One example of the disincentive of the CPMU in being downwardly accountable to people is the manner in which the CPMU deals with community infrastructure works. While people's participation in small-scale infrastructure works was invariably of interest of all study communities, two CPMUs of Gio Binh and Gio Son advised the local people to contract these works out to external contractors. The CPMU staff attributed their hesitance in promoting people's participation in infrastructure works to the concerns about the unpredictable quality, progress and much facilitation effort required for this type of activities.

The above discussion indicates that the effectiveness of the accountability mechanisms controlling the CPMU is problematic. This means the downward accountability of the CPMU cannot be ensured, and depends on contextual characteristics of the communities, such as people's experience of participatory development, commitment to participation of local government leadership, and strength of the local organization. Thus, the downward accountability of the CPMU is likely to be a factors explaining empowerment in the CDD approach.

---

[28] In this study, the downward accountability of the CPMU is defined by the extent to which the CPMU promotes the participation in decision-making and the implementation of these decisions.

In summary, the Chiase program features a radical move toward democratic decentralization. Substantial decision making power is directly devolved to the local community which includes power to 'create rules', 'make decisions', and 'adjudicate disputes'. The power to 'implement and ensure the compliance' is given to a number of actors: the VMG, the VSG, and the CPMU who are held accountable to the local communities through different accountability mechanisms. While the accountability of the VMG and the VSG are to a considerable extent ensured, the mechanisms controlling the downward accountability of the CPMU are not sufficiently effective. It, therefore, can be expected that the level of downward accountability of the CPMU would vary among communes depending the local context. Given the theoretical relationship between accountability and empowerment as discussed in chapter Three, this raises an important proposition of this thesis: whether there is a correlation between the levels of downward accountability of the CPMU and the empowerment impacts on the local people.

4.6. Conclusion

Although Vietnam has been experiencing impressive economic growth, poverty and inequality is still a big problem challenging the country. The Renovation during last two decades has unleashed the potential of the Vietnamese people and brought about economic growth and poverty reduction on a large scale for the country. At the same time, growing inequality has arisen in many aspects of Vietnamese society. Although the number of poor people at national scale has decreased, poverty is still highly concentrated in remote and rural areas, agricultural sectors, and ethnic minority groups. This means that there is a proportion of population lagging behind, or even excluded from, the impressive growth of the national economy and thus, a more effective poverty alleviation strategy is a pressing need. In response to the situation, in 2002, the CPRGS was put forward as an overarching poverty alleviation strategy for the country. The approach to poverty reduction at local level

adopted by the CPRGS emphasizes the empowerment of the poor through decentralization of control and people's participation in local decision-making which features a CDD strategy.

The context of the CDD approach in Vietnam is characterized by both types of facilitating and impeding features. On the one hand, the implementation of grassroots democratization legislation on a large scale creates an enabling institutional environment for the CDD approach. On the other hand, the ineffectiveness of the existing accountability mechanisms and the increasing social stratification may significantly affect the effectiveness of this development approach.

The Chiase program, with all typical defining features of the CDD approach, creates a democratic decentralization system, in which the development processes are managed and facilitated by the partnership between the local community, its elected representatives, and the CPMU - a part of commune government. While accountability mechanisms controlling the village-level elected bodies are relatively effective, the mechanisms controlling the CPMU's accountability appear to be less effective. This points to a hypothetical correlation between the downward accountability of the CPMU and the empowerment impacts on the local people. The next chapter details the methodology for this study. Following, chapter Six details the results of the analysis. The findings are discussed and conclusions are drawn, in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in this thesis in examining the following issues: the meaning of empowerment in the Chiase program, how and to what extent the program transforms the existing power relations between the elite and ordinary people, and the factors affecting empowerment. As discussed in Chapter Two, measuring empowerment is challenging due to its personal and subtle nature. The quantitative approach with pre-defined proxy indicators is not effective while a combination of qualitative and quantitative information may be more appropriate. Therefore, this study has employed a mixed-method approach involving the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in different phases.

The fieldwork was undertaken in four communes under the Chiase CDD program in Quangtri province in Central Vietnam. In each commune, two villages were included for data collection. The Chiase program was chosen for this study because it possessed the typical characteristics of the CDD approach, the concern of this thesis. Quang Tri province, which is located on the North Central Coast – a region with the second highest poverty incidence in Vietnam - represents a typical poor province in Vietnam. The data collection involved observation, group discussion, a questionnaire survey, key informant interviews, and secondary data. This chapter discusses four themes essential to the methodology of this thesis: the key methodological considerations in studying the defined research questions, the operation of data collection, the operation of data analysis, and the profile of the study area.

5.2. Methodological Considerations

5.2.1. Combining the Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

The idea of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods is increasingly popular in social and human sciences (Creswell, 2003: 208), having the advantages of: enabling some level of triangulation as it seeks convergence of results; allowing an examination of overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon; using methods sequentially in the sense that one method is used to help inform another method; identifying contradictions and fresh perspectives; and adding both scope and breadth to a study (Greene, *et al.*, 1989: 256-257). In addition, the mixed-method approach also helps the researcher avoid imposing 'a priori conceptualization on the target phenomenon' (Sandelowski, 2000: 247).

There are four factors affecting the selection of a mixed-method strategy of inquiry. First, is the implementation sequence of the qualitative and quantitative data collection in the proposed study. It can be 'sequentially', where two types of data are collected in different phases, or 'concurrently', where different types of data are gathered at a time. The second factor refers to the priority being given to the qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Third, is the stage of the research where the qualitative and quantitative data are integrated. This may be at data collection or data analysis. In the data collection stage, the 'mixing' may involve combining closed-ended questions with open-ended questions in the questionnaire. 'Mixing' in the data analysis stage may involve transforming qualitative information into quantitative numbers. The final consideration is the extent to which the research is guided by a theoretical framework (Creswell, 2003: 211-213).

The methodology chosen by this study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches which can be termed the 'concurrent transformative approach' (Creswell, 2003: 217-219). This methodology is guided by the theoretical framework

presented in Chapter One. The collection of qualitative and quantitative data was done concurrently during one phase of the research, and equal significances were given to qualitative and quantitative methods. The analysis of all research questions was facilitated by both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data is done at both data collection and analysis phases. The rationale for using this combination approach, as put by Creswell (2003), is that it can 'result in well-validated and substantiated findings', as well as provide 'perspectives from the different types of data' (p.217), though this type of research is not without its problems.

5.2.2. Problems Associated with Survey Research

During the course of survey research there are a number of problems which can potentially affect the quality and accuracy of the data obtained. According to Hines (1993: 732), the problems can be categorized into three areas: problems with linguistic and conceptual equivalence; problems with measurement; and problems arising from the nature of the survey/interview process. The first problem is that the concepts under study may not have any meaning or equivalent meaning for different groups being surveyed. In these cases, people's responses would be unreliable. Second is the problem with the measurement. Even if the conceptual equivalence is assured, to measure the same concept across different groups may require different indicators. For example, measuring the degree of marital satisfaction may vary from culture to culture. In one culture it may be characterized by the level of intimacy but in another culture, it may be reflected through the extent to which a partner performs his/her social role (Hines, 1993: 732). Further, the importance of certain concepts may differ between groups or respondents. Topics of interview may be irrelevant if the respondents are asked for information on subjects about which they have no information or no opinion, or topics may be 'taboo' or culturally insensitive. In these cases, if being asked questions which are difficult to discuss, the

respondents may avoid answering or give normative answers in terms of 'what is preferred', that is, the answers they think the researcher is looking for. In addition, measurement techniques, say the Likert scale or multiple choices, may be unfamiliar to the respondents and make them confused leading to the problem of 'scale equivalence' where a similar grade on a Likert scale may reflect quite different experiences. Finally, a 'courtesy bias' in which people try to be polite and helpful can also interfere with the way the respondents answer. All of these factors can affect the reliability of the information collected. Interviewer characteristics, such as gender, age, ethnicity, personality, and professional status, can affect the interviews; as do the place, timing, and presence of other people can also influence respondents' response and also the verbal and nonverbal behavior of the researcher (Hines, 1993: 733). Respondents can be aware of the sponsoring agency or institution and its political ties, and so the very act of asking the question can set up a power relationship between the researcher and the respondents, which can lead to problems with the quality of the data being collected (Goetz, 2001: 100).

Recognizing the potential biases of the survey, this study made an effort to minimize them by how the discussion was conducted, how the questionnaire was formulated and how the variables were analyzed. The researcher lived in the villages and familiarized himself with the local context before conducting the survey. The communication was done in simple language understandable to all. The interview was conducted in villagers' homes at the time most convenient for the respondents, with a mix of closed and open-ended questions, allowing enough time for the free discussion to grow. All survey questions, especially multiple-choice questions, were framed in a way that was contextually appropriate and understandable to people (Appendix 3). These measures went some way to overcome the problem of the unequal power relationship between the

researcher and the respondents. The methodology used for data analysis also contributed to minimizing the bias, as discussed in data analysis section.

5.2.3. Establishing Causality in Cross-sectional Design

Establishing a causal relationship is of central concern in explanatory research. However, establishing a causal relation is difficult because one cannot actually observe one event producing change in another (De Vaus, 2001: 34). Even though two variables are correlated, their changes may be induced by a third variable – often termed a spurious variable. Therefore, the causal relationship must be inferred rather than observed (De Vaus, 2001: 34). To find a causal relationship between two variables, two criteria must be met: a co-variation between the two variables exists, that is, a statistical correlation between two variables is confirmed; and second, the cause must come before the effect, the dependent variable must be capable of change, and there must be a plausible account for the connection between the two variables from either theory or other empirical research (De Vaus, 2001: 35-36).

With regard to cross-sectional research design, whereby data are collected at one point in time, establishing a causal direction is problematic. As discussed above, the correlation between two variables is not enough to establish a causal direction between them. One way to approach this dilemma is to develop a priori model, that is, a theory about the causal relationship being proposed on the basis of theoretical considerations and previous research, and test it (De Vaus, 2001: 180-181). While an accepted an a priory model does not prove causal direction, at least it provides a theoretical basis for arguing a relationship and provides empirical data that are consistent with the model. If the result of statistical analysis is consistent with the an a priory model, the next step would be to adopt a research design that can establish a causal direction. Even if the development of a new

study to establish causal direction cannot be done, retrospective information or people's responses about the causal relationship of concern can shed light on the direction (p.181). However, in many cases, causal direction is clear if independent variables are fixed (e.g. gender and race), or are not subject to manipulation (e.g. age, religion and education), or time orders between the co-related variables are straightforward (e.g. education level and income) because the reverse direction is impossible.

This study relied on a cross-sectional design where data were collected at one point in time. In order to establish a causal direction between empowerment and independent variables, the study developed a priori model of empowerment in the form of a theoretical framework. This model was tested by Logistic Regression Analysis. To establish the time order between variables, retrospective information and people's responses were used.

5.3. Data collection

5.3.1. Pre-fieldwork Survey

The data collection in this study involved two stages: a pre-fieldwork survey and a survey. Initially, a pre-fieldwork survey was used to facilitate two objectives: identification of the study communes, and the development of the questionnaires. The pre-fieldwork survey involved several non-standardized interviews with key informants, group discussions with local people, observations, and testing of the questionnaire. The aim of data collection at this stage was to achieve a broad overview of the design features of the Chiase program, the performance of the Commune Project Management Unit (CPMU), the operation of village development activities, and to test the fitness of the interview questions. These sources of information, together with the theoretical background discussed in Chapters Two and Three, facilitated the selection of variables and formulation of interview questions, and the identification of study communes. These topics will now be discussed in detail.

Selection of Study Communes

The selection of study communes was based on the downward accountability of their Commune Project Management Unit (CPMU). The intention was to select two communes that were 'more downwardly accountable' and two communes that were 'less downwardly accountable'. The inclusion of these two categories of the CPMU was aimed to facilitate the analysis of a key proposition in this thesis: the correlation between empowerment outcome and the downward accountability of the CPMU. The theories of accountability (see Chapter Three) hold that downward accountability of a public body in a democratic system can be characterized by the degree to which the expectation of the constituents under its jurisdiction is satisfied, and therefore, can be measured through its efforts to facilitate people's involvement in public decision-making and the implementation of these decisions. This theoretical background was important as it suggested indicators of downward accountability for this study.

Specifically, downward accountability of the CPMU was assessed on the basis of its performance regarding the following indicators: 'providing information to local communities', 'facilitating technical tasks', 'involving local people in poverty assessment', and 'supporting communities in self-performing community works'. The assessment of downward accountability of each CPMU was done through a group discussion with local people in that commune, and after that, the commune was categorized into 'more downwardly accountable' or 'less downwardly accountable'. Here, it is noteworthy that the division between 'more downwardly accountable' and 'less downwardly accountable' is arbitrary, and made solely for the purpose of categorizing the communes under study. These categories were determined following a pre-fieldwork survey.

Four communes[29] were selected for this study. Gio An and Gio Viet communes represented 'more downward accountable' communes, while Gio Son and Gio Binh communes represented the 'less downward accountable' communes. Their performance regarding the above-mentioned accountability indicators is elaborated below. With regard to the 'provision of information' indicator, the performance of all four CPMUs was somewhat satisfactory. People in all communes acknowledged the importance of the CPMU in providing them with a wide range of information, that is, general information about the Chiase program, such as the funds available, the principles of support, sectors of support, operational procedures, rights and responsibilities of different partners; information about service providers; information about government procedures; and information about new production models. Likewise, all the CPMUs performed rather well in 'facilitating technical tasks'. As lack of technical skills was a common problem among the communities under the Chiase program, the CPMUs were effective in facilitating technical tasks, such as minute-taking, reporting, filling the activity proposals, and selecting service providers.

There was a significant difference, however, between the performances of the four CPMUs regarding how they 'involved people in poverty assessment'. During the period 2006-2007 the Chiase program adopted an 'explicit poverty targeting' mechanism so that any material benefit was to be given only to the 'poor' and the Commune People's Committee (CPC) was involved in identifying the 'poor' households. While the CPMUs of Gio An and Gio Viet communes arranged a meeting to consult people about the list of 'poor' before approval, the CPMUs of Gio Son and Gio Binh communes approved it without any meeting with the people. As the list of 'poor' households identified by the CPC

[29] This section focuses on only downward accountability of the communes. Background information about these communes is discussed in 'Profile of Study Area' section in this chapter.

often contained cases which were seen by local people as 'not deserving', the arrangement of a consultative meeting was important in gaining 'legitimacy' for poverty assessment by the CPC, and considerably decreased the discontent among local people.

Finally, the extent to which the CPMUs facilitated the self-performance of community infrastructure work also varied significantly between the selected communes. The CPMUs of Gio Binh and Gio Son recommended the local communities to contract all community work out to professional contractors, even though the local people wanted to perform these tasks themselves. On the other hand, the CPMUs of Gio Viet and Gio An accepted and facilitated people's involvement in small-scale infrastructure work. This participation was applied only to the technically straightforward components of work, such as ground leveling, soil excavation, water pipe installation, and fencing. The technically complex components were still contracted out to the contractors. Although all the CPMUs recognized that the beneficiary participation in infrastructure work could provide great scope for enhancing people's capabilities and community capacity for collective action, they were cautious about this approach. Many staff attributed their hesitance toward the community participation in infrastructure works to the fact that it required much time and effort to organize people, and facilitate and supervise the construction processes. In addition, as the quality of participation was uncertain, therefore, it made them more vulnerable to criticisms from upper levels. The fact that the CPMUs of Gio An and Gio Viet supported people's participation in small-scale infrastructure work indicated their strong commitment to people's participation, or in other words, their downward accountability.

Questionnaire Development

The pre-fieldwork survey was useful in that it indicated what information it was

possible to collect from the respondents during the fieldwork and provided the direction for the development of the methodology and the questionnaire. Based on the understandings of the situation, the questionnaire and interview checklists were revised and further developed. A pre-survey test of the survey questionnaire and in-depth interview themes was undertaken for 20 respondents and two key informants in order to identify questions which were inconsistent, unclear or irrelevant to the respondents. Based on the result, corrections were done. Through this pre-fieldwork survey, the scale of this research was determined: the survey was administered to 216 respondents in two 'more downward accountable' communes and two 'less downward accountable' communes as determined in the pre-fieldwork analysis, and sixteen key informants, including eight ordinary villagers, four village leaders, and four staff of the CPMU, were involved in the in-depth interview.

The in-depth interviews emphasized the factual data, attitudes, and subjective exploration with the respondents about empowerment in the Chiase program and the cultivation of empowerment in particular social settings. These interviews gave a good insight into how the Chiase program affected local residents and how people's empowerment was cultivated that could not be provided by survey data. The mix of the questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews complemented each other. The survey could describe the overall levels, rates, and differences between sub-groups and could be used for statistical analysis to establish relevance, while the qualitative interviews could give deeper understanding of the processes of change in the empowerment phenomena.

The questionnaire developed for this study (Appendix 3) was adopted and modified from the framework developed by Kabeer (1999) on measuring empowerment. Empowerment was primarily measured in terms of agency, that is, perceived changes in the range of choices and actions of the respondents. Further, information about the

improvement in assets and capabilities, and consequences of empowerment was also collected in order to facilitate a nuanced understanding of three interrelated dimensions of empowerment and the operation of this concept[30]. The study also sought factual data about ethnographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. In addition, information about the performance of three empowering processes and factors which may affect empowerment was also collected. Specifically, the questions were grouped into six sections as follows (see Appendix 3):

- ethnographic information on the respondent;
- socio-economic information on the respondent;
- performance in poverty targeting;
- people's participation in local decision-making.
- social networks of the local people.
- empowerment outcomes for the local people.

5.3.2. Survey

Sampling and Sample Size

This study adopted a multi-staged sampling approach. Based on the performance of the CPMU, two 'more downward accountable' and two 'less downward accountable' communes were selected (see previous section). From the four selected communes, eight villages (two from each commune) were identified for the survey according to the following criteria: the villages have been involved in the Chiase program for similar

[30] According to Kabeer (1999: 437-438), empowerment has three interrelated dimensions. The first dimension is resources for empowerment, which include not only material resources but also human and social capital. The second dimension is agency, which refers to the ability to make choices and act on them. Finally, the achievement or outcome of empowerment is the actual manifestation of changes in people's 'being and doing'.

periods of time; and the villages have similar poverty rates. Here, a similar timeframe for being involved in the Chiase program and similar poverty rates for the selected villages allowed this study to control for these two factors in analyzing the factors affecting empowerment outcomes for people. The control of timeframe and 'poverty rate' factors was necessary because both of these potentially can affect the power resources, and thus, the empowerment outcomes.

Table 5.1: Summary of Sub-samples

No	Commune	Village	Village Population (household)	Poverty rate (%)	Village sub-sample (household)	Poor group (household)	Non-poor group (household)
1	Gio Viet	Viet Trung	96	44	30	13	17
		Viet Loc	100	42	30	13	17
2	Gio An	An Son	78	41	24	10	14
		An Van	93	39	30	12	18
3	Gio Binh	Binh Lich	75	37	24	9	15
		Binh Kim	64	36	22	8	14
4	Gio Son	Son Dong	97	37	30	11	19
		Son Khe	86	35	26	9	17
	Total		689		216	85	131

Source: Field Survey 2007

In each village a sub-sample of 30 per cent ÷ 35 per cent of the village population was drawn. Based on the poverty rate of the villages[31], a stratified sampling was used to identify the number of poor and non-poor households to be included in each village sub-sample. In 2007, when this survey was conducted, the poverty rate was determined based on the new MOLISA poverty line for the period 2006-2008 which was specified as: VND 2.4 million per year in rural areas; and VND 3.0 million per year in urban areas. The

[31] As the new MOLISA poverty line for the period 2006-2008 was significantly higher than the poverty line for the period 2001-2005, poverty rates in 2007 were much higher than that of the previous period.

poverty rates in the study villages are shown in table 5.1

Finally, in each sub-sample, systematic sampling was adopted to select respondents. The respondents were also selected in a stratified sample on the basis of gender so an equal number of men and women were included in each village sub-sample. The final sample was 216 cases. A summary of sub-samples is presented in Table 5.1.

Interview Process

A questionnaire survey was administered to 216 respondents in eight villages of four selected communes, and the interview was carried out solely by the principal researcher. From an understanding of the problems associated with the survey research there were three important concerns that were kept in mind in carrying out the interviews. The first was to make sure all respondents had the same understanding of the questions. Questions were asked in a language easily understood by local people and dialect was used when possible. Further, while the explanation and elaboration of questions were important to help the respondents have correct understanding of the questions they did not 'lead' to a particular answer. For instance, regarding the question about the change in respondent's agency, the researcher did not prompt the respondents with selection but rather checked the selection based on people's narratives. Finally, acknowledging that if being asked questions which are sensitive to discuss, the respondents may give normative answers in terms of 'what is preferred', the researcher attempted to seek examples and an explanation for the respondent's answers or perceptions.

Secondary Data

Apart from the data collected from questionnaire and in-depth interviews, this study also relied on secondary data, including: the Project Documents, the Project Implementation Manual, Village Development Plans, reports, and statistical data. These sources of data mainly served to provide background understanding of the rules and

regulations, organizational structure, planning and management procedures, and operation of the program under study.

5.4. Data Analysis

5.4.1. Meaning of Empowerment

The methodology in this study recognizes that the key concept being analyzed - empowerment – is contextual (Alsop *et al.*, 2005: 19; Speer, 2000: 52), and can be explained differently in different cultural settings (Murthy, 2001: 30). This recognition significantly affects the methodology employed to measure empowerment outcomes. It is obvious that a survey based on predetermined indicators in which respondents are asked to select one of a series of possible or expected outcomes can lead to various biases. Therefore, an inductive approach was adopted to avoid manipulating or imposing a fixed conceptualization of this phenomenon.

This research question, exploring the meaning of empowerment and its consequences in the Chiase program, relied solely on a qualitative approach – 'free listing' methodology, proposed by Hines (1993: 738-739). This is a methodology of Cognitive Anthropology which is often used to define culturally specific domains (Hines, 1993: 739). A domain here is defined as an organized set of words, concepts, or sentences that all relate to a single concept, and these can be organized into taxonomies, which are systems of classifications. The rationale for using this methodology is that it involves '... uncovering ways in which various cultural groups classify and divide concepts', which provides 'valuable insight into the way a particular group defines and organizes reality' (Hines, 1993: 738). This involves two steps: a free listing in which the researcher asks the respondents to list all the items they believe are included in a particular domain; and then these lists can be categorized into taxonomies based on explicit or implicit priorities identified by the respondents (Hines, 1993: 739).

The qualitative analysis provided data on the specific characteristics of the 'agency' of the respondents on the basis of how the respondents described the changes in their roles in relation to decisions important to them that they had experienced. People's narratives of changes in their agency were organized into 'categories' or groups of related responses. In addition, people's narratives were also used to explore the elements inducing the changes in agency and the consequences of these changes in order to corroborate the analysis of factors affecting empowerment. Further, the responses of empowerment were then summarized by 'elite' and 'non-elite' groups, male and female, and communes with 'less accountable CPMU' and communes with 'more accountable CPMU' in order to provide a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

This summary of empowerment responses by 'elite' and 'non-elite' groups inherently required a clearly-defined set of characteristics of the elite. Generally, the 'elite' can be defined as a relatively small subgroup of society whose members comprise: people who are much more highly educated than the average citizens, people who are much wealthier than the average citizens, and people who are recognized by other members of society as deserving privileges based on their birthright and/or by their performance of certain occupations (Ober, 1989: 11). This definition suggests a number of distinguishing characteristics of the elite: wealth, political status, membership in powerful social organizations, educational attainment, and profession. Further, Dasgupta and Beard (2007: 238-240) in a study of a CDD program in Indonesia, identify two broad categories of the elite: 'old' elites are 'long-time residents who have been active and have had leadership roles in the community for an extended time' (p.239), and often 'an older generation of civil servants, teachers, and retired military service personnel ... the leaders of the ward' (p.238); and the 'new' elites who are often younger, better educated professionals whose

status derives from their professional occupations or their relatively high economic status (p. 238, 239).

In addition, several studies on Vietnamese rural communities found that the differentiation in rural communities during the Renovation period was mainly attributed to off-farm sector employment, which included jobs in the government sector (Kerkvliet, 1997: 65; Luong and Unger J., 1998: 66). Political position and entrepreneurship were among the key factors that accounted for the success of rural households in non-farm activities (Luong and Unger J., 1998: 82). As a result, households with political positions, capital, skills, and knowledge were more likely to succeed in gaining benefits created by the renovation process and leave the resource-poor households far behind (Tran, 2004a: 158).

Relying on the above theoretical definitions of the elite and the empirical findings about the differentiation in rural communities, this study defines the elite group as comprising the following categories: the local leaders including village head, party members and leaders of local organization branches; incumbent and retired government staff; the economic better-off, and professionals including teachers, nurses, technicians, and veterinarians. The following sections elaborate the methodology examining the transformation of local power relations.

5.4.2. Effectiveness of the Chiase Program in Transforming Local Power Relations

Following the theoretical discussion in Chapter Three, the effectiveness of the Chiase program in transforming local power relations was assessed though examining the performance of poverty targeting mechanisms adopted by the program and the creation of the 'political capabilities' of the poor, characterized by the improvements in people's participation in local decision-making and their social networks. This examination of

'political capabilities' was facilitated through comparing 'before intervention' and 'after intervention' statuses. Further, these changes were at times broken down into categories of 'poor', 'middle', and 'elite' in order to highlight the variation of program impacts on different groups of local people. The identification of the three groups was as follows: the 'poor' group comprised the households formally identified by the Commune People's Committee as poor households; the 'elite' included government staff, local leaders, better-off people, and professionals as discussed in detail in the previous section; and the 'middle' group comprised the households who did not belong to either the 'elite' or the 'poor' group.

Performance of Poverty Targeting Mechanisms

The Chiase program employed two separable poverty-targeting schemes for two periods 2004-2005 and 2006-2007, discussed in detail in Chapter Four. The analysis of the poverty targeting schemes focused on three themes: description of the mechanism, particularly the targeting method, implementing agents and eligibility criteria; targeting performance - the extent to which the program benefits were directed to the poor; and attendant effects of each targeting scheme on people's motivation for participation and community cohesion. These themes were mainly qualitatively analyzed with the supplementation of some quantitative data. Specifically, the examination of targeting mechanisms was facilitated by secondary data and the key informant interview. The performance of the first targeting mechanism was mainly analyzed based on secondary data (Village Development Plans and Reports) while that of the second mechanism was assessed on the basis of the questionnaire survey. Further, the key informant interview was used to produce a nuanced interpretation of the performance of targeting mechanisms. Finally, the attendant effects of targeting mechanisms were sought through open-ended questions in the questionnaire survey and key informant interview.

Change in People's participation in local decision-making

The Chiase program introduced a new decision-making structure in the study area which involved direct people's participation in all key decisions of the communities. This process induced substantial change in people's participation in local decision-making. As people's participation in local decision-making is mainly characterized by two questions, who participates and to what level participation is promoted (White, 1996: 7), the analysis of the change in people's participation in local decision-making focused on two dimensions: changes in level of participation, and the extent to which 'elite', 'middle' and 'poor' groups participated. The change in level of people's participation was facilitated through examining the change in the scope of issues decided by the local people between 'before intervention' and 'after intervention' statuses, and mainly involved qualitative data collected from key informant interviews.

The extent of people's participation was measured by two variables: 'meeting attendance' and 'activeness in the meeting'. The variable 'meeting attendance' was rated against a four-point scale of 0-3: 0 if the respondent never attended a meeting; 1 if the respondent occasionally attended a meeting; 2 if the respondent often attended a meeting; and 3 if the respondent always attended a meeting. The variable 'activeness in the meeting' was rated against a four-point scale of 0-3: 0 if the respondent never took the floor; 1 if the respondent rarely took the floor; 2 if the respondent occasionally took the floor; and 3 if the respondent often took the floor. Further, qualitative data, including incentives for people's participation, obstacles obstructing people's participation, and impacts of poverty targeting policies on people's motivation for participation, were collected. In addition, the relevance of community decisions was also assessed by seeking people's perception collected through the questionnaire survey.

Change in People's Network

Following the discussion in Chapter Three, this study assessed the change in the social capital of poor people by looking at their social networks rather than measuring change in level of trust or reciprocity as a community property. This is an attempt to overcome the criticisms holding that the focus on community social capital obscures both class differentiation and power relations (Fine, 2001: 57; Harriss, 2001: 113-115). This also facilitated an exploration of the difference between the social networks of the elite and that of the non-elite villagers, as Rao and Wanton (2004) argued that the emphasis on community social capital can contribute to inequality because the elites 'are able to access internal and external social networks that are more powerful and wealthy' (p.16).

In rural societies, 'individual households are embedded in multiple institutional settings at the same time and ... [they are] related to household livelihood strategies' and these institutional settings primarily consist of regularized practices between individuals that exist in a personal network with family members, friends and local elites (Nuijten, 1999). Therefore, in this study, the social networks of the local people were explored through the interview question asking people about the most important sources of support that their well-being had relied on (for example: paid employment, assistance in crisis times, credit, provision of agricultural extension services). Then the information about sources of support was summarized by 'elite', 'middle' and 'poor' groups in order to highlight the differences in social networks between the elite and non-elite.

Further, the marginal change in people's social networks was examined by looking at the changes in relationships with these sources of support. The change in relationships with the providers or intermediaries of support was rated against a three-point scale of: -1, 0, +1: -1 if the change was negative; 0 if no change occurred; +1 if the change was positive.

To differentiate the change in social networks caused by the Chiase program from those caused by other reasons, respondents reporting changes in their social networks were ask to give an example and explanation about how the change occurred.

5.4.3. Factors Affecting Empowerment in the Chiase Program

The analysis of the factors affecting empowerment was facilitated by two related components: first, a logistic regression analysis of factors which might have some bearing on the empowerment of the local people; and second, a qualitative analysis of these factors which was relied on people's responses and an analysis of democratic decentralization in this program as presented in Chapter Four. The outcome of the qualitative analysis was used to corroborate the findings of the logistic regression analysis.

The logistic regression analysis involved the empowerment outcome as the dependent variable and a number of independent variables. The dependent variable - empowerment - was examined in terms of the probability or likelihood a respondent experienced empowerment. It was measured on a categorical scale with two categories: 1 if the respondent experienced a change in his/her agency, and 0 if the respondent did not experience any change in his/her agency. Six independent variables were included in this analysis: education level, level of participation in local organizations, wealth level, amount of material support received, number of training courses attended, and downward accountability of the CPMU. Though these variables were measured against different scales the reliability of the analysis of this thesis was not affected because emphasis was placed on the direction of change rather than comparing the magnitude of change.

Educational Attainment

Education is important for the empowerment of the people in the CDD approach since educational attainment should give them favorable access to knowledge and basic skills which are crucial for their performance in various domains of life. Poverty has been

widely attributed to lack of education (UNDP, 2001: 53-54; Vu, 2004: 230). Johnson (2001: 525) also argues that the ability to 'obtain and understand information about laws, policies, and the rights to which one is entitled' is dependent on ability to read. Therefore, individual educational attainment can be seen as a potential determinant of empowerment. Education was measured by the number of years of schooling and treated as a numeric variable.

Participation in Local Organizations

Theories of empowerment show that participation in local organizations can affect the likelihood one is empowered because group processes provide members with important organizational resources and create a sense of empowerment with the groups (Drury and Reicher, 1999: 383; Kroeker, 1996: 124). The context of rural societies in Vietnam, where local organizations play an important role in facilitating people's access to a range of government supports, such as: credit, extension services, subsidies and emergency aids, further increase the significance of this variable toward empowerment. The variable 'participation in local organizations' was measured by the number of local organizations a respondent took membership in, and was analyzed as a numeric variable. Although this variable is related to the number of available organizations in a community, it does not affect the validity of the analysis because the Chiase program as well as other CDD programs in Vietnam exclusively targets poor rural communities where civil societies are under-developed, local organizations are mostly mass organizations and somehow identical among communities.

Wealth Level

Wealth level is important because it in part represents the agent's resources which form the 'vehicle' or 'media' for the exercise of power (Giddens, 1979: 91). Given that data about income and expenditure are difficult to adequately collect, and the validity of using

asset as an indicator of wealth level has been justified (Filmer and Pritchett, 2001: 128), this study measured the wealth level of the respondents in terms of household assets. The wealth level of a household was measured as a composite index. Based on local norms for poverty and the indicators local people used to define and measure poverty, this thesis measured household assets from three aspects (1) quality of house, (2) quality of household facilities, and (3) means of communication. In each aspect, an indicator was rated against a 4-point-scale, with 3 being the highest and 0 the lowest. A cumulative score on 3 indicators reflects the score of wealth index, which ranged from 0 to 9.

The indicators were rated as follows. First, quality of house was measured as: 0 if living in temporary housing; 1 if living in a brick house with low-quality furniture; 2 if living in a brick house with average-quality furniture; 3 if living in brick house with concrete roofing. Quality of household facilities was measured as 0 if having no access to the following facilities: clean water, electricity, and toilet with septic tank; 1 if having access to only one of the three above facilities; 2 if having access to two of the above three facilities; 3 if having access to all of the above three facilities. Means of communication was measured as 0 if having none of the following assets: TV, telephone, and motorbike; 1 if having one of the above three type of asset; 2 if having two of the above three types of asset; 3 if having all the above three types of asset.

Material Support

Increased control over resources is a key aspect of empowerment (Osmani, 2000: 23; Sen G., 1997: 2). Therefore, the relationship between 'material support' and empowerment is theoretically plausible. Further, in the context of poor rural villages where material deprivation is pervasive, the effects of economic support may be even more significant. In this study, the variable 'material support' was measured by the number of

occasions on which a respondent received material benefits from the Chiase program, and was treated as a numeric variable.

Training

Gita Sen (1997: 2) argues that empowerment involves two interrelated components: enhancement of cognitive strength and control over resources. As the training courses in Chiase focused on a number of themes ranging from production skills and health to gender equality, it can be expected that the number of training courses a respondent attended would be related to his/her awareness and confidence in dealing with household and community issues. Therefore, the correlation between empowerment and 'Training' is theoretically plausible. The variable 'training' was measured by the number of training courses a respondent attended and was processed as a numeric variable.

Downward Accountability of the CPMU

In democratic systems, the effectiveness of decentralization is also to a considerable extent determined by the downward accountability of the public body (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 476; Blair, 2000: 27). The Chiase program is basically a democratic decentralization system which is characterized by the partnership between the local communities who control the decision-making and resources for development, and the Commune Project Management Unit (CPMU) which is responsible for monitoring and facilitating the local development process. Therefore, downward accountability of the CPMU may be important to the empowerment effect of the Chiase program. Further, given the localized nature of the implementation of grassroots democracy in Vietnam as discussed in Chapter Four, the correlation of empowerment outcomes on people and downward accountability of the CPMU is likely. Based on the pre-fieldwork analysis, two 'less downwardly accountable' and two 'more downwardly accountable' communes were selected as discussed previously. Downward accountability of the CPMU was rated on a categorical scale, with two values: 0

for 'less downwardly accountable' communes; and 1 for 'more downwardly accountable' communes.

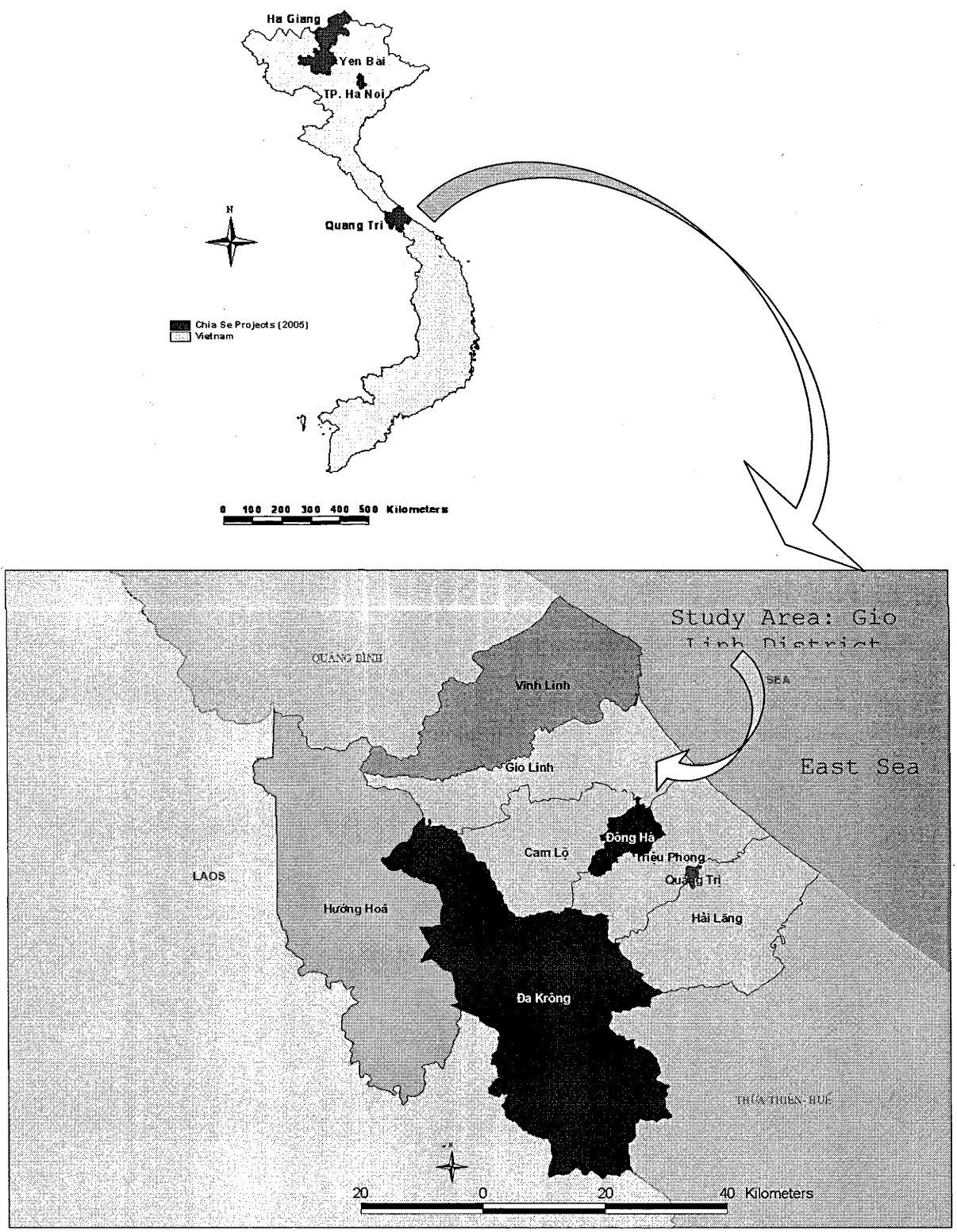
5.5. Profile of Study Area

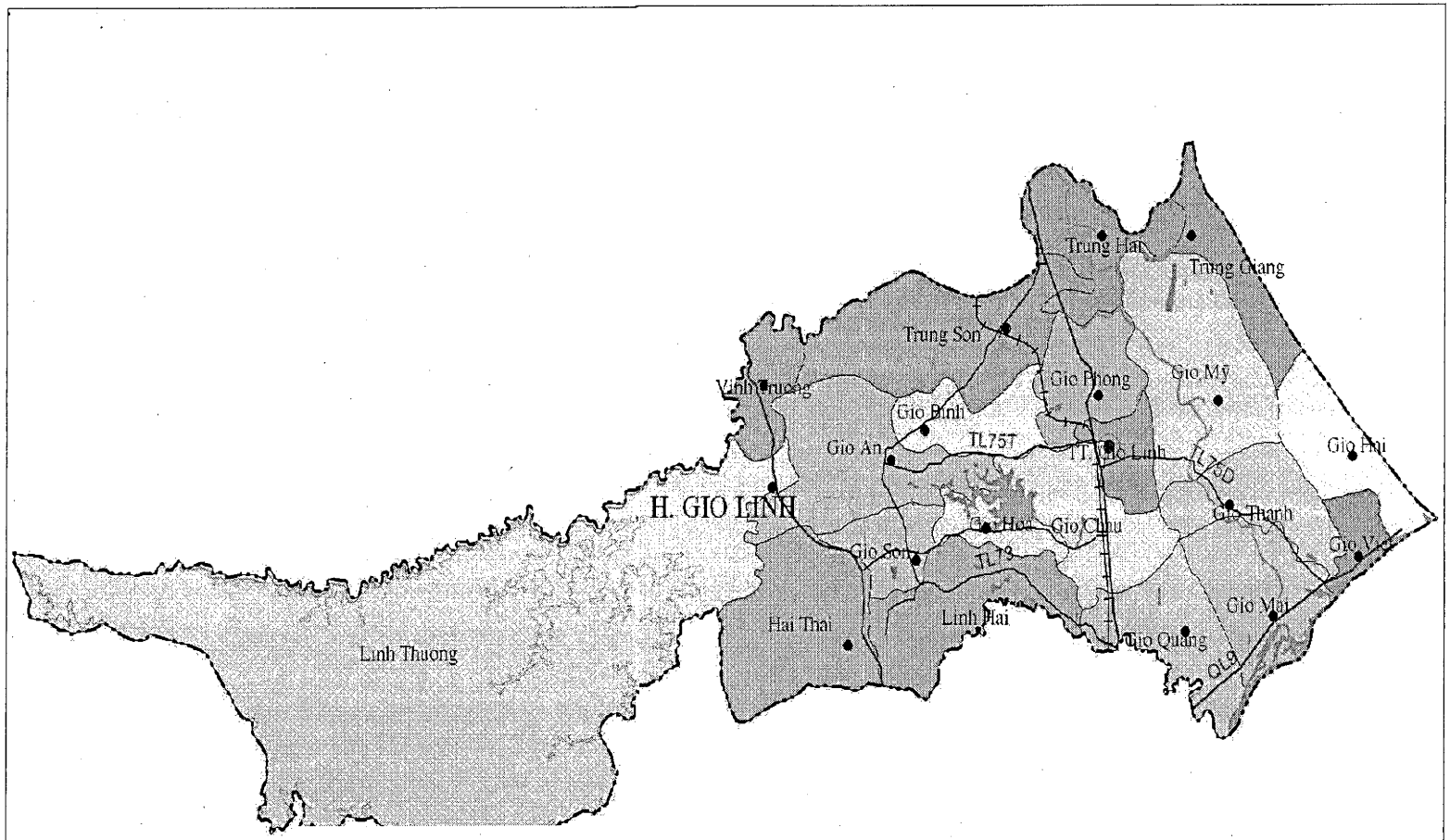
5.5.1. Quang Tri province

The fieldwork was carried out in four communes Gio An, Gio Binh, Gio Son, and Gio Viet of Gio Linh district, Quang Tri province. The province is located in the North Central Coast region, is approximately 600km to the South from Hanoi, and borders Quang Binh province to the North, Thua Thien Hue province to the South, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos to the West and the East Sea to the East (See Map 1). This area suffered from serious damage during the American war and was almost completely in ruins after 1973. It has a total area of 4,651 square kilometers (465,100 ha) which is geographically divided into four zones: the coastal, the lowland, the midland, and the highland. The province has a coastline of 75 km with two estuaries, one island, and a territorial water of 84,000 km^2 which forms a vast fishing field, and an in-land water surface of 1,400 ha of which 400 ha is brackish water, suitable for aquaculture development. The total population of the province was about 621,600 persons in 2005, of which rural population accounted for 75.5 per cent with 469,200 persons. Kinh is the ethnic majority group accounting for 85.9 per cent of total population. There are two ethnic minority groups of Van Kieu and Pa Co who live mostly in highland areas. The province has 2 towns and 7 districts with 117 communes (Quang Tri Statistical Yearbook 2005).

Quang Tri is one of poorest provinces in Vietnam. Based on the GSO poverty line, in 2002, it was ranked the 14^{th} poorest out of 61 provinces in the country with a poverty incidence of 52.2 per cent while the country average is just 36.5 per cent (Minot and Baulch, 2002: 25). If the MOLISA poverty line is applied, the provincial poverty rate in 2002 was 24.6 per cent (Chiase Quang Tri Project Document, 2003: 8).

Map 3: Map of Quang Tri Province and Location of Study Area





Map 4: Map of Gio Linh District and Location of Study Communes

Based on the Human Development Index, which incorporates three dimensions of well-being, income, health and education, the province was ranked 42nd out of 61 provinces (National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001: 90). A poverty assessment study (Quang Tri DPI Annual Report, 2002: 21) found that poverty at household level was caused by the following factors: lack of knowledge and production experience; lack of capital for production; lack of labor, that is households with high dependence ratio or poor health; sickness and disability; lack of land for agricultural cultivation; and natural calamities (p.21).

5.5.2. Gio Linh District

Gio Linh district is located in the north of Quang Tri province (see Map 3) with a total area of 473 km^2 divided into coastal, lowland, midland, and mountainous zones. The district consists of nineteen communes and one township, of which ten communes are incorporated in the Chiase program, with sixty-seven beneficiary villages. In 2005, it had a population of 77,888 persons, living in 16,573 households, of which 35,874 persons were at working age. Overall the labor force was poorly educated, with only 1.1 per cent having a college or university degree (District Statistical Yearbook 2005).

Local production is predominantly agriculture. Farming, husbandry, forest and fishery production play a vital role in the economic structure of the district, employing 81.1 per cent of the total labor force, while industry, handicraft and construction attract 13.2 per cent, and trade and services employ 5.7 per cent (District Statistical Yearbook 2005). The agricultural production in the district is to a large extent influenced by the tropical monsoon climate: the hot and dry monsoon with Southwestern winds, during the period of March to August, which often causes drought; and the wet and cold monsoon with Northeastern winds, during the period September to February, which is often associated with heavy rains,

storms, and floods. Production is characterized by a low level of technology adoption and high susceptibility to frequent storms and typhoons. Off-farm employment, such as rural industry, services, and small business, are still at a rudimentary stage.

The poverty rate in Gio Linh district is a bit higher than the provincial average level. In 2002, based on the MOLISA poverty line, about 29.8 per cent of the local households were classified as poor, while if the GSO poverty line was applied, the poverty rate went up to 61.2 per cent. The average annual per capita income in 2002 was 95 USD, much lower the national average. Poverty is most acute in the coastal and highland areas (Chiase Quang Tri Project Document, 2003: 10).

5.5.3. Study Communes

Gio Viet is a coastal commune located in the southeast of Gio Linh district with a total area of 5.5 km^2. It has seven villages, of which the two villages Viet Trung and Viet Loc, were selected as sites for the survey. It is home to 1,477 households, of which 484 households are classified as poor. The poverty rate[32] was 32.8 per cent in 2006. The commune has one primary school, one secondary school, and one clinic and all the member villages have access to electricity. The main infrastructure problem is the bad condition of the transportation networks in winter. The commune residents mainly earn their living from near-shore aqua-product exploitation. The supplementary sources of income include paddy, sweet potato, cassava and husbandry (Gio Viet CPMU annual report 2006).

Gio An is a midland commune located in the west of the Gio Linh district. It covers an area of 27.8 km^2 and consists of seven villages, of which the two villages of An Van and An Son are incorporated in the survey for this study. The commune has 759 households

[32] Poverty data for the study communes are based on the most up-to-date MOLISA Poverty Line for the period 2006-2008.

with 3,282 persons. In 2006, the poverty rate was 27.1 per cent, with 206 households classified as poor. The commune has one primary school, one secondary school, a clinic, and a rather developed road network. Lack of access to clean water is one of the serious problems of the local people. Gio An is an agricultural commune with a diverse crop system. The main crop is paddy cultivation while secondary crops include been, sweet potato, cassava, and fruit trees. Industrial crops are also developed, with pepper and rubber plantation. Raising livestock and fresh-water fish are also important sources of local income (Gio An CPMU annual report 2006).

Gio Son is a midland commune located in the west of the Gio Linh district with a total area of 8.4 km^2. The commune consists of five villages, of which Son Dong and Son Khe were selected for the survey. It is home to 650 households, with 36.0 per cent of them or 234 households classified as poor. The commune has one primary school, one secondary school, and one clinic. Communication routes are mostly earth roads, some hamlets still do not have access to electricity, and many people lack access to clean water. Local people mainly earn their living from agricultural production. The crop system includes paddy, cassava, sweet potato, and beens, while husbandry is also an important income source (Gio Son CPMU annual report 2006).

Gio Binh commune is located next to the district township. The commune has 499 households with 2185 persons, living in six villages. The two villages being incorporated in the survey for this thesis are Binh Kim and Binh Lich. In 2006, the poverty rate in the commune was 34.1 per cent, with 170 households classified as poor. The commune has one primary school and one clinic with a relatively developed communication route. However, some hamlets of the communes still lack access to electricity. Most local residents make their living from a mixed crop system including paddy, been, sweet potato, cassava,

vegetable, and fruit trees. Husbandry is a supplementary source of income. Some local residents work for a state-run rubber tree plantation nearby and have substantially higher incomes as compared to the average level of the commune (Gio Binh CPMU annual report 2006). .

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter describes the methodology used in the thesis and gives a brief of socio-economic status of the area where the field-work was conducted. The research adopted a mixed-method methodology involving both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. Given the contextual and subtle nature of the research issue of concern and the constraints on time and financial resources, the use of a mixed-method approach in this study was appropriate.

The methodology used for the analysis of the first research question – meaning of empowerment – was based on the methodology derived from Hines (1993: 738-739), in which people's self-evaluation is used to determine categories of responses. Based on these categories, the meaning of empowerment in the Chiase program and the implications for the transformation in power relations were inferred. The examination of the second research question – the effectiveness of the Chiase program in transforming local power relations - was based on factual data about the performance of this program and people's attitudes. Implications for transformation of power relations were sought through measuring effects on people's participation in local decision-making and social networks. Further, where relevant, the program effect was compared for the 'elite', 'middle' and 'poor' groups. The last research question – factors affecting empowerment of the poor - was mainly explored through a logistic regression analysis of the relationships between empowerment and six potential factors: education level, extent of participation in local organizations, wealth level, amount of material support received, number of training

courses attended, and downward accountability of the CPMU. The next chapter outlines key findings of the study.

Chapter Six: The Results

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the key results of this study achieved through three components of analysis. First, people's perception of changes in agency and their consequences are explored in order to highlight the meaning of empowerment in the Chiase CDD program and some implications for power relations change. The main finding of this analysis is that empowerment in the Chiase program, in terms of the changes in agency, is experienced as improved performance in two broad domains of life: household and community; and further, while the 'elite' are more likely to achieve empowerment in the community domain, the 'non-elite' are more likely to achieve empowerment in the household domain. Further, the performance of poverty targeting mechanisms and the improvements in people's participation in local decision-making and social networks are examined. While remarkable impacts on power relations are recorded, problems associated with program design and constraints of local people, which inhibit the empowerment, are identified as well. These findings have important implications for the implementation of the CDD approach in Vietnam.

The final finding is that there is a significant correlation between empowerment and the level of downward accountability of the CPMU - the government partner in the Chiase program. This finding supports the notion that the empowerment impact of the Chiase program is stronger if the CPMU is more accountable to the people. Other factors that are strongly correlated with empowerment are a respondent's participation in local organizations and amount of benefits and training the respondent has received. The next section analyzes these findings in detail.

6.2. Meaning of Empowerment

6.2.1. Responses of Empowerment

A central concern of this study is the characteristics of empowerment experienced by the people under the Chiase CDD program. As discussed in Chapter Two, empowerment can be validly measured in terms of change in agency and based on people's subjective measurement. The key question that the fieldwork looked at was how the respondent's empowerment, in terms of change in agency, occurred during the implementation of the program. Then, the influencing factors and consequences of these changes in agency were also sought to facilitate a nuanced understanding of empowerment in this program.

This section focuses on people's perception about the empowerment the villagers had experienced. The people's perception about empowerment would include various forms of change in agency they had experienced, and their consequences. The responses to the questions asking about the changes in people's agency in the survey are relative in that they are about the difference between present and past status of a person's ability. Though the responses were very diverse, they can be grouped into five categories.

- ability to influence household decisions;
- ability to handle household issues more independently and efficiently;
- ability to have more voice in village issues;
- ability to query the local officials; and
- ability to influence the performance of community works.

As an important concern regarding decentralized development initiatives is whether elite capture[33] occurs, this study examined the difference between the empowerment

[33] Elite capture is defined as where decentralized power is used to influence political outcomes through

Table 6.1: Responses of Empowerment

No	Forms of Change in Agency	Groups of respondents			
		Elite group (n=37)		'Middle' and 'Poor' group (n=189)	
		F	%	F	%
1	Influence household decisions	4	10.8	28	15.6
2	Handle household issues independently and efficiently	5	13.5	56	29.6
3	Influence community decisions	20	54.1	24	12.7
4	Query the commune-level staff	12	32.4	19	10.0
5	Influence the performance of community works	11	29.8	6	3.1
		Male (n=108)		Female (n=108)	
		F	%	F	%
1	Influence household decisions	0	0.0	32	29.6
2	Handle household issues independently and efficiently	32	29.6	29	26.1
3	Influence community decisions	28	25.9	16	14.8
4	Query the commune-level staff	19	17.6	12	11.1
5	Influence the performance of community works	15	13.9	2	1.9
		Less accountable CPMU (n=102)		More accountable CPMU (n=114)	
		F	%	F	%
1	Influence household decisions	15	14.7	17	14.9
2	Handle household issues independently and efficiently	28	27.5	33	28.9
3	Influence community decisions	14	13.7	30	26.3
4	Query the commune-level staff	13	12.7	18	15.8
5	Influence the performance of community works	6	5.9	11	9.6

Source: Field Survey 2007.

impacts of the Chiase program on the elite and those on the other groups of local people. In

manipulation of information and perceptions, or by limiting the voice of others (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 384).

doing so, the responses were summarized by two groups: 'Elite' and 'Middle and Poor' which facilitated a comparison of changes in agency between these groups in study communities. In addition, the responses were compared between male and female, between 'less accountable' and 'more accountable' communes. Further, for each form of change in agency, its affecting factors and consequences at both individual and community levels were examined. The responses of empowerment are summarized in Table 6.1

'Influence Household Decisions'

There were thirty-two female respondents regarding a range of changes which referred to the ability to 'influence household decisions'. The respondents explained that before the implementation of the Chiase program, the husband would unilaterally take major decisions on key household issues, such as investment on production or purchase of assets. Through the implementation of this program, at the time of this survey, it was reported that many household decisions were either jointly made or being made after greater consultation with women. While the changes in family decision-making were very context-specific, the responses were mostly related to following issues: purchase of household assets, investment on household production, children's education, and the practices of farming and livestock rearing. The implication of greater consultation was that the women could influence the important household decisions to a greater extent. The respondents largely attributed these changes to two factors: increase of women's productive skills and their contribution to household income, and improvements in awareness about rights and entitlements by both men and women. That is, the increase in contribution to household income and productive skills created a sense of confidence for the women in dealing with the men, while the improved awareness about human rights and entitlements substantially enhanced their sense of self-worth. Further, through attending village meetings and training courses on gender equality, men also changed their perception about

role of the women in the family life.

The consequence of this change in people's agency was an increased sense of self-esteem and more equal domestic relationships. More than one-fourth of female respondents mentioned being more respected by their husbands. For instance, a woman said:

> The project increased my production skills and awareness of my rights. Now I feel much more confident in dealing with my husband. I can discuss with him about issues of our family and make a stand for my view if needed. He no longer disregards my opinions as before. (Field Survey, Viet Trung village, June 2007).

The respondents also mentioned being released from domestic violence as an impact of the Chiase program. The ending of gender-based violence was also reported by the key informants as a remarkable change through the implementation of the Chiase program. On the other hand, men's thought about the role of women also changed as about two-thirds of the husbands of this group of female respondents said that through the implementation of the Chiase program, they better understood and highly appreciated women's contribution to household living. Significantly, public concern about gender equality was created in the study villages, which was reflected in the words of a village Head:

> In this village, there was a man who, when he got drunk, often beat his wife and children. Before, we thought it was a family matter and did not get involved. After attending the training on gender equality, we understand that what conduct is unlawful and unacceptable. So, we [leaders of mass organizations in the village] talked to him seriously about this issue and he has stopped beating her though he still kept drinking (Field Survey, An Van village, March 2007).

In relation to theories of empowerment (see Chapter Two), as this form of empowerment - the ability to influence household decisions - is characterized by the development of a sense of self-esteem, confidence and improved skills, it refers to the increase of 'personal power'. Data in Table 6.1 indicates that the percentage of 'elite' group

experiencing this form of empowerment was much lower that that of the non-elite group, at 10.8 per cent and 15.6 per cent respectively. This may be attributed to the fact that 'elite' women were less disempowered in this respect than the non-elite in the first place. That is, the 'elite', comprising government officials, local leaders, professionals and better-off people, are often more educated and socially connected, and likely to be better informed about gender equality and less influenced by traditional norms which mostly favor patriarchal structures. Both 'less downwardly accountable' and 'more downwardly accountable' groups of communes had a similar rate of people acquiring this form of empowerment, at 14.7 per cent and 14.9 per cent respectively.

'Handle Household Issues Independently and Efficiently'

This is the group of changes with the highest response rate, at 28.2 per cent. The respondents, mostly the 'poor' and 'middle' farmers, reported a change in their ability to act independently and efficiently. They identified two types of change: first, the support of the Chiase program in terms of social infrastructure, for example the construction of a water supply system or the installation of an electricity network, had made them no longer dependent on their neighbors or relatives for essential living facilities. Through these improvements, the respondents could lead a more independent life. For example, a poor farmer in Gio An commune stated:

> Thanks to the building of the water supply system, my family no longer has to fetch water from the neighbor's well. Now I feel much more confident and independent in dealing with the folks (Field Survey, An Son, March 2007).

Second, the respondents also mentioned the ability to manage household production more independently as an important change they had experienced. These changes were attributed to the improvements in terms of access to productive assets and production skills. For instance, the respondents mentioned that the provision of oxen for poor farmers made

them less dependent on hiring tractors and increased their control over the household production. Further, the introduction of new crops, which were more profitable than paddy, and new livestock rearing techniques had substantially raised the efficiency of the local people's production. A farmer explained:

> Previously, when raising a cow, the herdsman had to follow it all the time. Now, applying the new raising techniques, we do not have to follow it. We just tether it in one place and feed it with grass and salt. Doing this makes the cow grow faster and saves much of our time and efforts (Field Survey, Binh Kim, April 2007).

The responses showed that this form of empowerment had resulted in a sense of confidence and increased control over household living and production for the respondents. This form of empowerment can be classified from Chapter Two as an increase in 'personal power', an increase in the confidence and capabilities of the respondents.

Data in Table 6.1 shows that the proportion of the 'non-elite' group experiencing this form of empowerment was 29.6 per cent, far exceeding that of the 'elite' group at 13.5 per cent. The superior performance of the 'poor' group with regard to this form of empowerment may be in part attributed to their lack of access to productive assets, domestic infrastructure, or production skills in the first place. The difference between male and female in terms of achieving this form of empowerment is negligible (29.6 per cent and 26.10 per cent) while the difference between the 'less downwardly accountable' and 'more downwardly accountable' communes in this respect is a bit more significant (27.5 per cent and 18.9 per cent).

'Influence Community Decisions'

A group of forty-four respondents reported a change in ability to influence community decisions. The responses from the survey largely referred to the decisions governing the allocation and management of the Village Development Fund (VDF).

Specifically, the village issues that the respondents had discussed and decided covered the following areas: identification of problems and proposals for change, approval of priority activities to be implemented every year, identification of the beneficiaries, formulation of regulations governing the VDF, and selection of service providers.

The implementation of democratic decision-making through village meetings by the Chiase program gave local people the opportunity to discuss and make cooperative decisions on key issues of the communities. As mentioned above, all key decisions regarding the planning and management of the VDF were directly decided by the villagers, through majority voting. This mechanism significantly enhanced people's awareness of their democratic right and sense of ownership, which facilitated their willingness to participate in village meetings, as demonstrated by the expression of a leader of the Women's Union Branch in Gio An commune:

> Chiase is the only project allowing us to select development activities and beneficiaries by ourselves. We can define the problems of our village and devise the actions to solve the problems as well. We are now more self-motivated because we control our own development (Field Survey, Viet Loc, March 2007).

This group of respondents identified two important consequences. At the community level, the respondents in this group reported that through implementation of the Chiase program, community decisions became more relevant to local problems. As to the individual level, the acquirers of this form of empowerment gained a sense of confidence and improved social skills, what is public speaking. In relation to theories of empowerment (see Chapter Two), this change in ability to 'influence community decisions' features an increase of both 'personal power' defined as increased skills and self-efficacy, and 'political power' defined as the ability to influence the allocation of social and economic resources.

Data in Table 6.1 indicates that this form of empowerment was more common among the 'elite' group, with about 54.1 per cent of this group reporting this type of change as compared to only 12.7 per cent of the 'non-elite' group. Male respondents were more active than females in this regard, at 25.9 per cent and 14.8 per cent respectively. The percentage of respondents from the 'more downwardly accountable' communes experiencing empowerment of this type is almost double that of 'less downwardly accountable' communes' (26.3 per cent and 13.7 per cent). This seems to indicate that the extent to which the Commune Program Management Unit (CPMU) is accountable to people has a strong bearing on the empowerment impacts of this program.

'Query the Local Government Officials'

Another group comprising thirty-one respondents reported the ability to query the local government staff, as the key change in agency. They could identify that their questions to commune-level government staff mostly focused on the provision of government support, such as: emergency aid for disaster victims, subsidies for elderly, disabled and lonely; selection of participants for agricultural extension services; and the allocation and management of the VDF in the Chiase program. Before the implementation of the Chiase program, though the right to query commune leaders had been institutionalized into grassroots democratization legislation, the understanding and exercise of this democratic right was very limited. People had very limited information about the government support they were entitled to and did not know where to go and how to apply for it. Further, their questions often received no feedback from the Commune People's Committee (CPC) and district-level line agencies. People reported that through the implementation of the Chiase program, the officials became 'closer' and more responsive to their inquiries.

According to the respondents, this form of empowerment was facilitated through the improved communication between the commune-level staff and local people. Through the village meetings, where the CPMU staff were required to attend to facilitate local planning and decision-making, people could acquire information and demand justification of the decisions of commune-echelon government. One respondent in Gio Viet commune asserted:

> Through the implementation of the Chiase program, the commune-level government became closer to the people and it was easier for us to acquire information and voice our opinion to the officials (Field Survey, Viet Trung village, June 2007).

The key consequence of this form of empowerment was the improved responsiveness of the government officials. The respondents in this group mentioned that the local government had been more responsive to people's feedback than before. A villager reported:

> The commune officials now join meetings with us frequently. They help us to prepare the proposals for Chiase-funded activities. They also informed us about government-support programs and help us to make the application (Field Survey, Son Khe village, May 2007).

Further, the respondents of this group reported an increase in access at individual level to available resources and in confidence in dealing with the officials. In relation to theories of empowerment, this form of empowerment is characterized by an increase in both 'personal power' defined as increased self-efficacy and 'political power' defined as the ability to influence the allocation of resources.

The percentage of 'elite' households reporting this form of empowerment was 32.4 per cent, much higher than that of 'non-elite' households at only 10.0 per cent (see Table 6.1). Male respondents had a higher rate of experiencing empowerment of this type than females, at 17.6 and 12.0 per cent respectively. Finally, the percentage of respondents from

'more downwardly accountable' communes acquiring this form of empowerment was 15.8 per cent, higher than that of 'less downwardly accountable' communes', at only 12.7 per cent.

'Influence the Construction of Community Works'

Seventeen respondents referred to the ability to influence the performance of community works as the significant change they felt in their agency. Before the implementation of the Chiase program, all infrastructure work in the study villages was managed by the district or commune-level government. People's supervision, though institutionalized in the grassroots democratization legislation, did not exist in the study communities. Under the Chiase program, people's involvement in the supervision and inspection of community works had been encouraged and facilitated. The change was explained by a respondent in Gio An commune:

> Under the Chiase program, people's participation in the supervision of infrastructure work was substantially improved. Apart from the supervision performed by the construction supervisor, local people also monitored the construction process. When the work was completed and handed over to the village, the villagers were involved in inspecting the shortcomings as well. The contractors must correct all defects found by people otherwise the village will decline to make the payment (Field Survey, An Van village, March 2007).

The respondents largely attributed this change to the devolution policy of the Chiase program which gave the control over the VDF to the villagers and involved them in implementing and monitoring the community works. This substantially raised a sense of ownership among local people and also made the act of people's supervision become more legitimate in the eyes of the contractors. People's opinions were no longer disregarded as before. Further, access to information about construction sub-projects, such as technical design or budget estimates, was also crucial for the increased participation of local people in supervising infrastructure work. However, it is noteworthy that only a small group,

mostly the retired officials, experienced farmers and village leaders, were active in this respect.

This form of empowerment affected both community and individual levels. The consequence for the local communities was the increased cost-effectiveness of community infrastructure work. The respondents of this group claimed that the Chiase-funded works managed by the villagers was more cost-effective than those conventionally managed. Further, these respondents reported that through involvement in the supervision activities, they became 'more confident and skillful' in monitoring infrastructure works and could perform better in future. These changes feature an increase in both 'personal power' and 'political power' of the local people.

Data in Table 6.1 indicates that the percentage of 'elite' households experiencing this form of empowerment (29.8 per cent) was much higher than that of 'non-elite' households (3.1 per cent). This is not surprising as supervising community works required some technical skills and was not of interest to the majority of poor people. Males also dominated females in this respect, with 13.9 per cent and 1.9 per cent respectively reporting this form of empowerment. The percentage of respondents from 'more downwardly accountable' communes experiencing empowerment of this type was much higher than that of 'less downwardly accountable' communes' at 9.6 per cent and 5.9 per cent. The inferior performance of the 'less downwardly accountable communes' in this respect is predictable as people's participation in construction work was limited in these communes.

6.2.2. Domains of Change in the Chiase Program

People's responses about their empowerment through the implementation of the Chiase program described in the previous section refer exclusively to the changes in decision-making in two broad domains: household and community. First, in the household

domain, there were two groups of responses, those around 'influencing household decisions' and those around 'handling household issues independently and efficiently', which were related to decision-making at the household level. This is about the acquisition of 'personal power', which is defined as the increase of a sense of self-esteem, confidence and basic skills (Schulz and Israel, 1991: 10). The consequences of the change in agency in the household domain included changes in domestic relationships, independence of the household and efficiency of household production. Change in the household domain, according to the respondents, though having no direct effect on the political power, were of importance to the respondents.

Empowerment in the community domain is characterized by ability to 'influence community decisions'; to 'query the local government officials'; and to 'influence the performance of community works', which are all examples of decision-making on community issues. At community level, these changes led to an increase in the relevance of community decisions, responsiveness of local officials, and cost-effectiveness of community works. The consequence at individual level was an increase in both skills and confidence, defined as 'personal power', and the ability to influence the allocation and management of community resources, known as 'political power' (Schulz and Israel, 1991: 10).

A striking finding emerging from Table 6.2 is that the rate of 'non-elite' people experiencing empowerment in the household domain was 42.5 per cent, while for the 'elite' it was 19.0 per cent, while the rate of 'elite' people experiencing empowerment in the community domain was 62.1 per cent, far exceeding that of the 'non-elite' at only 14.5 per cent. The Chi- Square test indicates that, at 95 per cent confidence level, the differences in the empowerment rates in both household and community domains between the two groups

are statistically significant (see Appendix 6). This means the 'elite' were more likely to experience empowerment in the community domain while the 'non-elite' were more likely to achieve empowerment in the household domain. This finding has important implications for the implementation of the CDD approach and will be returned to in the next chapter.

Table 6.2: Empowerment in the Household and Community Domains

Group	Domain of Empowerment			
	Household		Community	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Non-elite group (n=179)	76	42.5	34	19.1
Elite group (n=37)	7	19.0	23	62.1

Source: Field Survey 2007.

6.3. Effectiveness of the Chiase Program in Transforming Local Power Relations

6.3.1. Poverty Targeting in the Chiase Program

Poverty reduction is obviously a focus of the Chiase program as its objective is for 'poor households [to] have good access to poverty alleviation resources'. Poverty incidence is consistently considered among the key criteria based on which the provinces, districts and communes are incorporated into the program (Chiase Program Document, 2003: 36). The focus on poverty is maintained as one of the key principles in implementing the program activities at all levels from village to national (Program Field Manual, 2003: 5). This section focuses on the performance of poverty targeting mechanisms in the Chiase program and its attendant effects.

During the period 2004-2005, the program adopted a 'Community-based targeting' mechanism and involved the local community as the 'intermediary agent' (see Chapter Three). The local communities were solely responsible for formulating poverty criteria, assessing eligibility and implementing the delivery of benefits. The identification of poor households was done directly by the local people, through majority voting if consensus

could not be achieved. All the study villages managed their VDF through 'revolving fund' schemes. They decided that the support must be in the form of a loan to be paid back to the VDF and the non-poor were also eligible for economic support though the poor people were more prioritized in providing loans. The rationale for using loans, instead of grants, was that households would be more responsible and keen to work harder, thus making the income generating activity more profitable if they had to pay back the support they had received. Further, by supporting people in the form of loans, other people in the village could also borrow money from the VDF, through which sustainability of the VDF was achieved. Each village approved a set of regulations on the management of its income-generating fund.

After two years of implementation, it was revealed that in the study villages this Community-based poverty targeting mechanism had delivered material support to both poor and non-poor households, though the rate of poor households receiving material benefits was much higher than that of the non-poor (see Table 6.3). This tendency was also known to the program authority. The 2005 Gio Linh DPMU Annual Report found that 1,646 poor households and 2,675 non-poor households had received loans from the Chiase program in the two years 2004 and 2005, and concluded: 'The villages tended to equally allocate program financial resources to local households'[34] (2005 Gio Linh DPMU Annual Report, 2005: 14). The key informants attributed this phenomenon to two factors. First, the potential severe punishment of failure to pay back the loan had made many poor people – who have a low and unstable economic base – fearful about borrowing from the VDF. Second, local people largely perceived equity - a principle of the Chiase program as equal

[34] However, it is noteworthy that though the number of non-poor receiving loans, as shown in the report, was larger that that of the poor, the percentage of poor households receiving loans still far exceeded that of the non-poor, as the poverty rate of Chiase-funded villages in Gio Linh district in 2005 ranged from 16.2 to 29.4.

opportunities for all to get benefits from the program. Therefore, as poor households had already received support in the form of loans during the first year, in the second year, the villagers believed that program benefits should come to the non-poor, even though some poor households wanted to borrow more money.

Table 6.3: Number and Percentage of Households Receiving Material Support in 2005

No	Village	Number of households			Number and Percentage of beneficiary households			
		Total	Poor[35]	Non-Poor	Poor		Non-Poor	
					Number	%	Number	%
1	Viet Trung	96	26	70	14	53.8	7	10.0
2	Viet Loc	100	18	82	9	50.0	8	9.8
3	An Son	78	17	61	10	58.8	16	26.2
4	An Van	93	18	75	11	61.1	18	24.0
5	Binh Lich	75	19	56	12	63.1	20	35.7
6	Binh Kim	64	14	50	7	50	13	26.0
7	Son Dong	97	24	73	12	50	17	17.8
8	Son Khe	86	21	65	10	47.6	16	24.6

Source: 2005 Village Development Plans

This phenomenon shows a discrepancy between the poverty targeting expectations of the program authority and the preferences of the local villages. While the program planners and managers expected that most program resources would be directed to the poor, local people mostly held the view that economic benefit provided by the Chiase should be given to all villagers though priority could be given to the poor (see Table 6.4). This was the most equitable and fairest way of distribution of economic resource as perceived by the majority of local people. This local preference had significantly affected the poverty targeting outcome of the program.

[35] The summary of poor households in this table is based on the MOLISA poverty line for the period 2001-2005, which is much lower than the poverty line for the period 2005-2008 when this survey was carried out.

Table 6.4: People's Preference of Alternative Targeting Policies

Alternative of Targeting Policy	Frequency	Percentage
1. Economic benefit is equally accessible for all	28	12.9
2. Economic benefit is accessible for all; priority is given to the poor	115	53.4
3. Economic benefit is accessible for the poor only	73	33.7

Source: Field Survey 2007.

In addition, community-based poverty targeting was also affected by factors other than destitution. Households seen by the local people as 'lazy' or 'socially irresponsible' – who did not fulfill their citizen responsibilities, such as not paying tax and regulated fees, not contributing to community works, or breaking village regulations - were less likely to be given support. There was also collusion in selecting the poor households through majority voting. For example, the village Head in An Van village explained:

> It's sometimes not equitable to select poor households by majority voting. Many people in good financial conditions were still voted as poor. In the meeting for selection of poor households, I advised people not to vote for those who were well off but they still did and the minority had to submit to the majority. At the same time, there were households who were really poor but not voted for. One example was Mr. T, whose wife had died, leaving him two small children. I raised my hand to vote for him, but only some people followed suit. People thought that he was often absent from meetings and was not qualified for program support. They said those who did not attend meetings would be rejected. That day, he [Mr. T] didn't join the meeting, but he in fact had attended some others. This problem was not caused by the cadres, but by people (Interview of key informant, An Van village, 2007).

In response to the leaking of development funds to the non-poor households, since 2006 the Chiase program authority has decided to change the Community-based poverty targeting mechanism into a government-based 'explicit' mechanism. Both local government and community were then involved in assessing eligibility. Further, the program maintained that economic support must be in the form of grants and given to

formally-identified poor households only.

In practice, the selection of beneficiaries involved two steps. First, the list of poor households in each village was to be identified by the CPC based on the poverty criteria set by the MOLISA. Second, the local communities were to select the beneficiaries for particular activities from this predefined list of poor households. Obviously, the accuracy of this 'explicit' poverty targeting mechanism then turned out to be dependent on two factors: the identification of poor households by the CPC and the identification of beneficiaries for particular activities by the local communities. However, the accuracy of the poverty assessment done by the CPC was often questioned by people as the list of 'poor' households identified by the CPC often contained 'non-deserving' cases[36] (Field Survey, 2007).

This government-based 'explicit targeting' mechanism caused two related problems. First, the exclusion of the non-poor households from accessing program benefits induced a widespread discontent among the non-poor people. It was reflected through the high drop-out of village meetings since the adoption of the new targeting scheme as will be examined in next section. Second, the identification of poor households by local government was often inconsistent with the perception of the local people. Most of respondents (92 per cent) reported that there were households identified by the CPC as 'poor' but were not really poor as perceived by local people though the number of these cases was not large (Field Survey, 2007). However, as the list of poor households had been

[36] In all eight study villages, the respondents complained about 'non-deserving' poor households. However, the number of complaints in villages where the CPMU held consultative meetings with people before approving the list of 'poor' was lower than that of other villages. Among four communes under study, only two communes, Gio An and Gio Viet, held consultative meetings with local people before approving the list of 'poor' households.

identified and approved by the commune government, the local communities could not rule these households out. Many complaints by local people referred to these cases and they were often mentioned as the examples of the unfairness of the Chiase program. This caused much pressure on the local leaders who directly implemented the delivery of benefits to the beneficiaries. The situation was explained by the village head in Gio Binh commune:

> Much dispute and contradiction arose from this way of selecting poor households. Though the households were classified as poor, average and well-off, in reality, many of them were in similar conditions. Some 'poor' households were in good economic conditions. When people queried these cases, we could not explain. The government staff should consult the village before finalizing the list of poor households (Interview of key informant, Binh Kim village, April 2007).

Logically, the discontent arising from the 'explicit' poverty targeting would considerably affect people's motivation for participation and community cohesion which are important factors of the empowerment of the poor in the CDD approach. These problems are examined in the next sections.

6.3.2. Changes in People's participation in local decision-making

Before the implementation of the Chiase program, in principle, people's participation in local decision-making in the study area was institutionalized by a range of grassroots democratization legislation[37] which specified four levels of people's participation to be mobilized depending on the nature of the issue in question: information sharing, consultation, decision-making, and supervision (see Chapter Four). However, in the study area, before the implementation of the Chiase program, in practice people's participation in local decision-making was still limited. Consultation about important issues, such as local development plans, land use plans, the implementation of national programs, was not done. People's supervision of the commune budget, land management

[37] The key contents of the grassroots democratic legislations are presented in chapter Four.

and construction works was not mobilized. Annually, commune officials only held two village meetings to inform people about key government policies, the commune development plans, and key decisions of the Commune People's Council and Commune People's Committee, but they were just one-way presentations and no discussion occurred. People's participation in decision-making was mobilized for only few activities relying on people's contribution, or for the elaboration of village conventions[38] (Interviews of Key Informant, 2007).

The extent to which local people participated in village meetings was also limited. The average attendance rates of village meetings were about 60 – 75 per cent of total number of households in the villages. In meetings, people were often passive and left the discussion and decision-making to a small group of local leaders including the village head, the secretary of the party cell, and some leaders of mass organization branches.[39]. Ordinary villagers were not active in exacting accountability, demanding transparency from the local government, and overseeing the use of the budget of the local government. They also rarely exercised leadership, undertook independent initiatives, or supervised infrastructure work (Interviews of Key Informant, 2007).

The Chiase program, by devolving the control over decision making and resources to the local communities, created a substantial change in the level of people's participation in local decision-making. The village meeting became the vehicle where all community decisions were made through direct people's participation. The participatory decision-

[38] The village conventions [huong uoc] have been reinstated in the study villages since the implementation of grassroots democracy legislation. They provided the basis for village's self-management. It is noteworthy that while the ancient form of village conventions served as the 'charter' for the administration of villages as administrative unit, the new form of village convention should be seen as a social code of practice governing people's behavior.

[39] Mass organizations include Vietnam Fatherland Front, Women's Union, Farmers' Association, Veterans' Association, and Youth Union.

making at village level was facilitated by the Village Management Group (VMG) – a locally elected body - and the CPMU – part of commune government. A wide range of key issues in the village, including formulation of the village development plans, formulation of regulations on the management of the VDF, selection of priority activities to be implemented every year, selection of beneficiaries, selection of service providers, and evaluation of activities implementation, were decided at the village meetings. In relation to theories of participation, people's participation in the Chiase program was promoted at a level of consultation and partnership (Arnstein, 1969: 217; Pretty, 1995: 1252). Further, under the Chiase program, the chairs of the VMG were also involved in managing the CDF.

However, the extent to which different groups of people participated in village meetings showed a more nuanced picture of people's participation in local decision-making in the Chiase program. From the outset, the Chiase program was successful in mobilizing a high rate of people attending village meetings (see Table 6.5). During the first phase, 2004-2005, the selection of beneficiaries was solely made by the communities without any restriction and all village residents could be considered for program support. The program provided a wide range of rewards, in both tangible and intangible forms, for the participants: economic benefit through income generating activities; improvement of community infrastructures, such as roads, water supply system, community houses, or electricity network; individual capacity development in terms of training and study tours; and the enhancement of social prestige for local leaders and active villagers. It seemed that this diverse set of rewards satisfied people's expectations, which resulted in a high rate of people's participation in village meetings. About 90 per cent of households in the study villages always or often attended village meetings. All three groups, 'elite', 'middle' and 'poor', had high rates of village attendance during this time.

Table 6.5: Frequency of Attendance at Village Meetings in 2005

Group	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never	Mean of 'meeting attendance' (0-3 scale)
1- Poor group (n=85)	44 (51.8%)	32 (37.6%)	8 (9.4%)	1 (1.2%)	2.40
2- Middle group (94)	58 (61.7%)	28 (29.8%)	6 (6.4%)	2 (2.1%)	2.51
3- Elite (n=37)	23 (62.2%)	10 (27.0%)	3 (8.1%)	1 (2.7%)	2.49
Total (n=216)	125 (57.9%)	70 (32.4%)	17 (7.94%)	4 (1.9%)	2.46

Source: Field Survey 2007

The adoption of the government-based 'explicit' poverty targeting mechanism[40] as a response to the perceived limitation of community-based targeting, which excluded the non-poor from income generating activities, significantly affected the motivation of this group. This is not surprising as the respondents largely saw material benefits as an important reward for their participation in collective activities. The effect was most serious for the 'middle' households whose economic condition may not be significantly different from that of the formally identified 'poor' households. The feeling of discontent was captured in the response of a non-poor farmer in Son Dong village:

> At the outset of program implementation, people attended its meetings regularly; but later on, the non-poor households were discontented and refused to join. Poor households benefited much more than the other households: apart from the provision of cows and crop varieties, they were given grants for housing repairs and their children's schooling. Many poor households had been granted cows in the last drive and were provided with further benefits in the following drive. As they got benefits from year to year, it was understandable that they went to meetings regularly. Though this program is named 'ChiaSe' [Sharing], it was not equitable. The State is right when giving priority to the poor, but it's absurd to support them chronically.

[40] Explicit poverty targeting is discussed in detail in chapter Five.

They have to work to escape from poverty (Source: Field Survey, Son Dong village, May 2007).

This problem, however, should not be overstated. Although the discontent caused a high drop-out rate among many 'middle' households, the motivation of the majority of local people was still maintained. This could be attributed to the diversity of the incentives system in the program, which offered a wide range of benefits to meet various expectations of the local people. Specifically, the 'explicit' poverty targeting which increased access of the 'poor' households to material benefits apparently increased the motivation of this group. For the local leaders and many active villagers, opportunities to discuss and make cooperative decisions regarding village issues were still strong incentives inducing their participation. In addition, access to training and information was also important in maintaining the motivation of many non-poor people.

Quantitative data about people's attendance at village meetings in 2006 also confirms the discontent of many 'non-poor' people and the decreased extent of their participation. The survey of this study showed that many respondents, including 'middle' and 'elite' households still attended village meetings even after the adoption of 'explicit' poverty targeting (see Table 6.6). About 78 per cent of total households in the villages often or always attended the meetings. Only 5 out of 216, 2.3 per cent of respondents, reported that they never attended the village meetings. However, it is noteworthy that the attendance rate of the 'middle' group was much lower than what of the 'poor' and 'elite' groups. Only about 19 per cent of the 'middle' group always attended village meetings as compared to 55.3 per cent and 45.9 per cent of the 'poor' and 'elite' groups respectively. The mean value of the 'meeting attendance' variable of the 'middle' group was also significantly smaller than what of the other two groups. Obviously, the poorer performance of the 'middle' group in terms of attendance rate at village meetings was considerable and, as

revealed through people's narratives, could be attributed to the discontent arising from the poverty targeting policy of the Chiase program.

Table 6.6: Frequency of Attendance at Village Meetings in 2006

Group	Always	Often	Occasionally	Never	Mean of 'meeting attendance' (0-3 scale)
1- Poor group (n=85)	46 (54.1%)	29 (34.1%)	9 (10.6%)	1 (1.2%)	2.44[41]
2- Middle group (94)	18 (19.1%)	47 (50.0%)	26 (27.8%)	3 (3.2%)	1.85
3- Elite (n=37)	18 (48.6%)	9 (24.3%)	9 (24.3%)	1 (2.7%)	2.14
Total (n=216)	82 (38%)	85 (39.4%)	44 (20.4%)	5 (2.3%)	2.13

Source: Field Survey 2007

The extent of people's participation in local decision-making was also reflected through the activeness of local people in village meetings which was much improved as compared to the state before the implementation of the Chiase program. The participants took the floor more frequently and were much more active in discussing village issues (Interview of Key Informants, 2007). However, data about the frequency of taking the floor in the meetings (see Table 6.7) showed that the 'non-elite' were still rather passive in village meetings as compared to the 'elite'. About one-third of the 'elite' group often took the floor while this indicator was only 4.7 per cent and 5.3 per cent for the 'poor' and 'middle' groups respectively. The mean value of the 'activeness in meeting' variable of the 'elite' group was 1.81, much larger than what of the 'poor' and 'middle' groups, which are 1.21 and 1.07 respectively. A t-test shows that, at 95 per cent confidence level, the 'elite'

[41] The increase of meeting attendance frequency of 'Poor group' and the decrease of meeting attendance frequency of other groups were attributed to the adoption of a government-based poverty targeting mechanism.

were significantly more active in village meetings than the 'poor' and 'middle' villagers (see Appendix 6). The findings suggest that though the incentives provided by the Chiase program were effective in raising the motivation of the 'poor' group to attend village meetings, their activeness in the village decision-making was still limited.

Table 6.7: Frequency of Taking the Floor in Village Meetings in 2006

Group	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean of 'activeness in meeting' (0-3 scale)
1- Poor group (n=85)	4 (4.7%)	24 (28.2%)	43 (50.6%)	14 (1.6.5%)	1.21
2- Middle group (94)	5 (5.3%)	17 (18.1%)	51 (54.2%)	21 (22.3%)	1.07
3- Elite (n=37)	11 (29.7%)	15 (40.5%)	7 (21.6%)	4 (13.5%)	1.81
Total (n=216)	25 (11.6%)	37 (17.1%)	116 (53.7%)	38 (17.6%)	1.25

Source: Field Survey 2007

In order to explore the factors impeding people's participation in community decision-making, the respondents who responded 'rarely takes the floor' or 'never takes the floor' were asked why they had not been more active in the village meetings. The responses were categorized into four factors as follows. The first is an attitude of dependence where people are accustomed to local leaders and other powerful villagers taking the leadership role in decision-making. For example, the respondents often mentioned such reasons as 'feeling afraid to voice an opinion', 'nobody would listen or pay attention to my opinion', or 'the cadres should know more about the issues of concern, so let them decide' (Field Survey, 2007). This is not surprising as the majority of people in the study communes had limited experience with participatory decision-making: in the study villages, before the implementation of the Chiase program, the control over development funds was never

devolved to the village level. Further, people's narratives also indicated that the formal and 'public event' nature of village meetings further compounded the above limitation of local people; that is, the village meetings, with the presence of all villagers and program staff, were intimidating to many local people and prevented them from being active in the meetings.

Second, lack of information and social skills was another obstacle impeding people's participation in the Chiase program. Local residents, whose typical contacts with government were through the Village Head, had very few connections outside their community, and were often unclear about government procedures as well as the Chiase rules and regulations. They also lacked information about new production models and service providers outside their communities which were essential in formulating and carrying out the village development plan. In addition, a large number of respondents mentioned lack of social skills, e.g. public speaking, as a problem making them less active. Consequently, many people often talked to each other outside the meetings but kept silence in the formal meetings. One poor farmer in Gio Binh commune explained:

> We participated in all meetings but never took the floor. We thought a lot but dared not speak out. As we were not sure about the issues under discussion, we were afraid that our ideas were wrong. We didn't want to lose face in front of the folk. So, we only talked with others outside the meetings (Field Survey, Binh Kim village, April 2007).

Third, the 'explicit' targeting mechanism which excluded the non-poor from income generating activities considerably affected the motivation of this group. It gave rise to a sense of alienation and discontent among several 'non-poor' people that seriously affected their participation. A farmer stated bitterly:

> Now we attended only the meetings discussing village issues. If the meetings dealt with issues related to the poor, we would opt out. Let the poor run their projects'

(Field Survey, An Son village, March 2007).

Finally, people might also choose not to participate for personal reasons, such as: 'prefer listening to speaking out', 'do not want to speak out if not necessary', or 'the issue under discussion is not of interest to me'.

What emerges from the above discussions is the superior performance of the 'elite' regarding participation in the village decision-making process in the Chiase program. Being endowed with stronger capabilities and favorable access to information, the 'elite' were more likely to succeed in taking up and utilizing the decision-making power devolved by the Chiase program. This point is also supported by the exploration of people's perception of empowerment in previous section, which shows the rate of the 'elite' experiencing empowerment in the community domain as much higher than the rate of the 'non-elite'.

One way of examining 'elite capture' phenomenon is looking at the extent to which Chiase activities are relevant to the local problems (see Table 6.8). In the study villages, a wide range of activities were implemented: the provision of pigs, cows and other productive assets for poor households, house repair for poor households, loans borrowed from village revolving fund for various purposes; training courses, health care activities; and the construction of community centers, kindergarten, clinics, culverts, earthen roads and irrigation systems. About eight to twelve activities were implemented in a study village each year. When this survey was undertaken, the Chiase program had been underway for three years and in each village under study, about 25 to 31 activities were implemented. It is not that all activities were seen by the respondent as relevant to the local context. In response to the question asking about the relevance of activities implemented in the villages, while about three-fourths of respondents perceived that all activities in their village were relevant to the existing problems, only 19.0 per cent thought that few activities

(one or two activities) were irrelevant and 5.6 per cent thought that many activities (more than two activities were irrelevant to the local situation. People's responses indicated that elite capture generally did not occur as the respondents largely agreed that the activities having been implemented in their villages were relevant to the local problems. In addition, people's narratives did not refer to any evidence of corruption or abuse of power. The improvement in the relevance of community decisions was largely attributed to the improved representation of the people in community decision-making.

Table 6.8: People's Perception about the Relevance of Village Activities

The relevance of village activities (n=216)	Frequency	Percentage
All activities are relevant	158	73.1 %
Few activities are irrelevant	41	19.0 %
Many activities are irrelevant	12	5.6%
Don't know	5	2.3 %

Source: Field Survey 2007

People's responses also indicated that people's participation in study villages had been mainly driven by instrumental considerations. People might participate in order to be qualified for material benefits for which only the 'poor' were eligible. They saw their participation as the 'cost' of the benefits they pursued. This was an important motive of the 'poor' households. Second, people might participate in order to be qualified for benefits for which all participants were eligible regardless of wealth status, such as information and training. Third, people might participate with a view to supervising the use of community resources, enforcing social equity and promoting community development. These different motives are not mutually exclusive but they do combine differently among different groups of people. However, it was noteworthy that nobody mentioned explicitly or implicitly changing local power relations as their motive.

In summary, the implementation of the Chiase program substantially improved the

level of people participation in local decision-making. When a Community-based poverty targeting was adopted, all groups of local people exhibited a high rate of participation in village meetings. When a government-based 'explicit' targeting scheme was applied, the participation of the 'middle' and 'elite' was considerably affected. However, overall, the participation of local people was still maintained thanks to the diverse incentives provided by this program. While the activeness of the ordinary people far lagged behind that of the 'elite', community decisions were still generally relevant to local problems, or in other words, elite capture did not occur. Further, the people's participation in the Chiase program was largely induced by instrumental reasons mostly related to the program benefits, either tangible or intangible, at individual or community levels.

6.3.3. Changes in People's Networks

People's social networks in this study were explored through examining the important sources of support that the well-being of local households had relied on. The responses showed that local people were engaged in a number of social networks and relationships with various actors who can be categorized into four groups: external agency officials; commune-level officials and village leaders; local employers and creditors; and relatives and friends. The social networks of local people can be characterized by their relationships with these groups of actors. The most important sources of support for local people were summarized in Table 6.9.

External agencies identified by respondents as having important impacts on local people in the study area included the District Agriculture Extension Station and the District Aquatic Breeding Center. These institutions are in charge of introducing new production models, conducting training on production skills and provide consultancy services to local people. Many rubber plantations in midland communes and shrimp breeding farms in

coastal communes under this study are supported by these two agencies. The support given by agricultural extension officials, as relevant to the respondents in this study, includes advanced production knowledge and skills and marketing information for rubber planting and shrimp breeding. Therefore, maintaining good relationships with the officials of the above agencies can have important impacts on the production of households who have applied new production models and techniques. Notably, respondents identifying relationships with these agencies as the most important source of support were mostly the 'elite' households.

Table 6.9: Most Important Sources of Support for Local Households

Source of support	Poor (n=85)	Middle (n=94)	Elite (n=37)
External agency officials	0	5 (5%)	10 (27%)
Commune-level officials and village leaders	43 (51%)	34 (36%)	6 (16%)
Local employers and traders	24 (28%)	25 (27%)	2 (5%)
Relatives and friends	18 (21%)	32 (34%)	19 (52%)

Source: Field Survey 2007

Commune-level officials were reported by a large number of respondents, mostly the 'poor' and 'middle' households, as their most important source of support. These actors performed as the intermediaries in providing many types of government support to local people, including low-interest loans for the poor, agriculture extension services, social security subsidies, and emergency aid for victims of disaster. Low-interest loans for the poor were provided by the Vietnam Bank for the Poor (VBP) through the facilitation and management of Commune Poverty Reduction Board and village units of mass organizations[42]. The Women's Union and the Farmers' Association also worked in

[42] Procedures for a poor household to borrow money from VBP are as follows: (1) A poor household submits an application to a credit group managed by either the village unit of Women's Union, Veterans' Association, or Farmers' Association; (2) The saving and credit group gathers applications and submits them with their name list to the Poverty Reduction Board at the CPC; (3) After investigation and confirmation, the Poverty

partnership with the District Agricultural Extension Station in coordinating and managing agriculture extension activities, such as training, study tours, and implementation of production models. Village Heads and commune-level staff were responsible for identifying candidates for social security subsidies including: elderly, lonely people, the disabled, and orphans. Finally, the provision of emergency aid, supporting the victims of natural calamities, was facilitated by the Labor and Social Affairs official of the CPC and the village Heads. In addition, the Commune People's Committee was also involved in settling local disputes if they were not successfully mediated at village level.

Assistance and loans from relatives and friends were also important sources of support for local people, especially in emergency situations. However, these sources of support, for the majority of poor people, were often insufficient and not always available. This in part is reflected in the rate of 'poor' households relying on this source of support being much lower than that of the 'elite' group (see Table 6.9). One poor farmer explained:

> 'In emergency situations, the friends and neighbors did help but their help was mainly spiritual. Only relatives offered material help, but which was often insufficient. As the entire village was poor and needed help, therefore, the government support was important' (Field Survey, Viet Trung village, May 2007).

A great number of respondents viewed the local employers and traders as their most important source of support. The responses show that these actors, for example the fish-sauce making shop owners in Gio Viet commune, agricultural production materials traders, or rubber tree plantation owners in midland communes, provided important sources of income and credit for the villagers. In the study villages, access to land, employment, credit and the conditions of such access are crucial to people. Given limited access to land and

---

Reduction Board at the CPC submits the lists to the District transaction office of VBP; (4) District transaction office of VBBP informs the CPC of the result of judgment and the date of disbursement, which is then passed on to the saving and credit group; (5) The leader of the saving and credit group informs the poor households of the date and place of disbursement; and (6) VBP directly lend money to the poor household.

productive assets, local people, especially the poor, largely relied on paid employment offered by the local employers. In addition, unable to either accumulate their own savings or obtain loans from established credit institutions for coping with social and natural shocks, people must borrowed from the local employers or traders. Some respondents (seven persons) approached the creditors in the nearby markets for relatively big loans which were used for investment.

While being an important source of support, employment and credit provided by the local employers and traders also, to some extent, tied the local poor people into a dependency relationship. This dependency relationship weakened power of the poor in bargaining the price of their labor, price of their products, and their status as free actors in capital market. A number of respondents accepted unfavorable terms of employment in order to repay the employers for their supports. However, it was also observed that this dependency relationship did not involve punitive interest rate schemes or life-long indebtedness on the poor.

It is noteworthy that there is an important difference between the networks of the 'elite' and those of the 'non-elite'. The 'elite' households mostly relied on relatives and friends, with 52 per cent of this group reporting this as the most important source of help. They also sought assistance from government support, but mostly relied on external agencies which provided greater benefits than the commune government did. Conversely, the commune-level officials and village leaders were the most important source of support for the 'poor' and 'middle' groups, being seen as the most important source of help for 51 per cent and 38 per cent of these groups respectively. Local employers and traders were also important sources of support for these groups. The percentage of 'poor' and 'middle' households relying on relationships with friends and relatives was much lower than that of

the 'elite'.

Table 6.10: Changes in People's Social Networks

Sources of support	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
External agency officials	7	209	0
Commune officials and local leaders	47	169	0
Local employers and creditors	0	216	0
Relatives and friends	0	204	12

Source: Field Survey 2007

The Chiase program generally created positive changes in people's networking with government officials (see Table 6.10). A great number of respondents, mostly the non-elite, improved their relationships with the commune-level officials. These changes were mostly attributed to the 'closer and more responsive' commune-level officials, or in other words, the decentralization policy of the program. The impacts of this change, as revealed through people's responses, were the improved connections with the commune-level officials and better access to a range of government support, such as provision of agricultural extension services, exemption from healthcare fees, credits for the poor, subsidies for the elderly disabled and lonely, and emergency aid. An example of the change in the networks of a poor household is shown in Box 6.1.

Further, seven respondents, who all belonged to 'elite group', reported improvement in their relationships with external agencies. This can be attributed to two factors. On one hand, through the implementation of the Chiase, these respondents had better access to information about agencies providing technical and financial support for rural development and poverty alleviation. On the other hand, the regulations maintained by the program specified in details the responsibilities of various state agencies in supporting local communities that enhanced their downward accountability. Box 6.2 shows an example of the changes in the relationship between the local people and external agencies.

Box 6.1: Hoa's Story

After getting married in 1996, Hoa came to this village. Her parents-in-law gave them a small house with a thatch roof, an old bicycle and some basic furniture. Having no land, her husband had to work as a casual laborer in construction sites while she worked as a rubber latex collector in a nearby rubber tree plantation. Since they earned little money and the income was irregular, so, they spent a rather difficult life at this time. Hoa often had to borrow money from the owner of the plantation where she worked.

In 2002, when their daughter was five years old, her husband got an accident and their life became very difficult. Their saving was quickly expended. They had to sell all valuable things to cover treatment and living expenses. They often experienced food shortage, and sometimes, hunger. Their neighbors and relatives often shared their food with them. Especially, Mrs. L., the owner of the plantation where she worked, helped them a lot by lending them money and giving them old clothes and appliances. They could not have been able to survive without this assistance.

At that time, the Chiase program was initiated in her village. She was selected as a beneficiary of Cow Raising project in 2004. After attending a training course which provided her with essential skills in caring for cattle, with a grant of 6 million VND provided by the Chiase program, she repaired the cow-house and started raising a steer. The commune agriculture extension worker and the veterinary officer visited their village regularly to provide necessary information and helped them to resolve problems. She followed all these instructions and the cows grew favorably. During the last three years, she has sold 2 cows, and presently has got a cow and two calves. In average, annual income from cow raising is about 5 millions which accounts for 50 per cent of her family's total income. With this supplementary source of income, the life of her family has been significantly improved

Along with economic improvements, her social network has been enhanced. She often shared with other villagers, who also participated in Cow Raising project, information about good practices in taking care of cows, and through which, established good relationships with them. She attended village meetings regularly to in order to have a grasp of the local situation. As the commune officials joined all important village meetings, she could ask them any matter of her concern easily. Hoa explained to me: 'through the implementation of the Chiase, officials become closer and more responsive to the people'. Regarding the local employers, Hoa said: 'Despite of the implementation of the Chiase program, the employment provided by local employers is still an important source of support for the poor'.

Source: Field Survey, Binh Kim village, May 2007.

Box 6.2. Hai's Story

Hai has settled in Viet Trung village since 1983, after fulfilling military service. He was an experienced fisherman and had a high prestige in the local community. He was also elected as the chairman of the Farmer Association Unit of this village. In early 2000s, when the demand for fish sauce in the local areas increased he intended to establish a fish sauce making shop with the production capacity of 10,000 litres per month and the total investment cost of 300 millions VND. According to Hai, this project, if being implemented, would benefit both him and other villagers: It would raise his income, create employment opportunities for unemployed women, and consume unsold fish. However, at that time, he could not manage to fund this project.

Since the implementation of the Chiase program, a lot of information about agencies supporting rural development and poverty reduction have been disseminated to the local villages. Annually, a Need Assessment Workshop was held by the District People Committee in order to connect the villages with the state agencies, banks, research institutions, NGOs and main service providers in the local area. Through these information channels, Hai approached many funding sources to convince them about the feasibility and socio-economic effects of his project. In 2005, IDE - an NGO aiming at developing small and medium enterprises - agreed to provide loan for this project. The project was implemented and came into operation in 2006. Presently, it employs 15 laborers with a monthly salary of 1.0 million VND, and consumes all unsold fish of the villagers. The relationships with external development agencies has now become a precious asset of Hai.

Source: Field Survey, Viet Trung Village, 2007.

While the Chiase program created remarkable changes in the relationships between local villagers and government officials and external agencies, no significant change in the relationships between the poor people and the local employers has been recorded. The poor people still largely saw the local employers as an important source of support. This is understandable for at least two reasons. On one hand, as shown in Hoa's story in Box 6.1, income generated through activities funded by the Chiase program may be not sufficient to cover all livings expenses of the poor people and they have to rely on the employment provided by the local employers. On the other hand, maintaining good relationships with the local employers can provide a 'safety net' in emergency cases for poor people who are

often very vulnerable to natural and social shocks.

At the same time, the networks among relatives and friends in study villages were slightly weakened (see Table 6.10). This can be in part attributed to the lack of cooperative economic activities and the inappropriateness of the poverty targeting policies. According to the key informants, the communes under study did not have any activity which aimed specifically at raising village cohesion; no cooperative income generation activity was promoted in any of the study communes; loans and grants were given directly to the households, and all income generating activities were managed at household level. The only activity that could facilitate the connectedness between local people was the participation in small-scale infrastructure work; however, these activities were often one-off activities and had limited scope for maintaining cooperation sustainably. Moreover, only Gio An and Gio Viet communes actually supported community participation in the construction of small-scale infrastructure work while the other two communes contracted all of their construction work out to professional contractors. In addition, people's responses also referred to the exclusion of the 'non-poor' from accessing material resources as a key factor giving rise to the discontent of many households, which might have blocked some of the social interactions between people in the study communities.

The above findings indicate that there was a transformation in the social networks of the local people with the political intermediaries which was an important source of support for the non-elite people. This change had significant implications for people's access to a wide range of government support and considerably contributed to their economic security and development. Networks with local employers and creditors, being unchanged through the implementation of the Chiase program, were still an important source of income of local people. Finally, the program caused some negative impacts on

local people's relationships with relatives and friends. It can be expected that with more appropriate design of poverty targeting, people's networking could be developed to an even further extent.

6.4. The Factors Affecting Empowerment in The Chiase Program

In order to assess the factors that may have affected the empowerment outcomes, a statistical analysis was carried out. As examined in the previous section, empowerment in the Chiase program might take place in the household and community domains, with different implications for the empowerment of the poor. While empowerment in the household domain has consequences on household independence and efficiency, and more equal gender relationships, empowerment in the community domain increase people's ability to influence the allocation of social and economic resources. Therefore, in this section, the analysis of factors affecting empowerment in each domain is done separately.

Empowerment – the dependent variable – is looked at in terms of the probability or likelihood of a respondent being empowered. It is measured on a categorical scale with two categories: 0 if the respondent does not experience any change in agency, or 1 if a change in agency is experienced by the respondent. Six independent variables are analyzed: educational attainment, wealth level, participation in local organizations, amount of material benefit received, number of training courses attended, and the downward accountability of the CPMU. While 'downward accountability' is measured as a categorical variable, all other variables are measured on numeric scale. The details of the definition and measurement of all dependent and independent variables are presented in Chapter Five. The different scales adopted for the different variables do not affect the reliability of the analysis in this thesis because the emphasis is placed on the direction of change rather than comparing the magnitude of change.

Table 6.11: Results of Logistic Regression Analysis for Empowerment Outcome

Model 1: Empowerment in Household Domain (n=216)			
Independent variable	B	Wald	Sig.
Material Benefit	.872	10.894	.001
Training	.399	4.764	.029
Downward accountability of the CPMU	.079	.062	.803
Participation in local organizations	-.120	.358	.549
Education Level	.093	1.749	.186
Wealth Level	-.219	3.312	.069
Constant	-1.390	2.694	.101
Cox and Snell R square = 0.195		Nagelkerke R square = 0.264	
Model 2: Empowerment in Community Domain (n=216)			
Independent variable	B	Wald	Sig.
Material benefits	.192	.532	.466
Training	.193	1.040	.308
Downward accountability of the CPMU	.747	4.585	.032
Participation in local organizations	.991	17.540	.000
Education level	.026	.110	.740
Wealth level	.040	.105	.746
Constant	-3.428	13.271	.000
Cox and Snell R square = 0.143		Nagelkerke R square = 0.209	

Source: Data Analysis

A statistical analysis using logistic regression was applied to establish the relationships between the probability of a respondent being empowered and the independent variables. The analysis results in two statistical models explaining individual empowerment probability in two domains: household and community. The results are presented in Table 6.11. In this table, B values are the ones which would be used in an equation to calculate the probability of a respondent falling into a specific category of dependent variable (0 or 1). The sign for a B value shows the direction of the relationship

between independent and dependent variables. A positive value for B indicates a factor which increases the likelihood of the dependent variable having value '1' and vice versa. A Wald value, which is calculated by the Wald test, shows the information about the contribution or importance of an independent variable. A Sig. value shows significance of an independent variable. At 95 per cent confidence level, a test is significant if the Sig. value is smaller than 0.05. The Cox and Snell R square and the Nagelkerke R square values provide an indication of the amount of variation in the dependent variable explained by the model.

Data in the first part of Table 6.11 shows that the likelihood of being empowered in the household domain is significantly determined by two variables: amount of material support a respondent received from the Chiase, and the number of training courses a respondent attended. The sign of the B value is positive for both variables which indicate two relationships: (1) the more benefit a respondent received, the greater the likelihood he/she will experience empowerment in the household domain; and (2) the more training courses a respondent attended, the more likelihood he/she will experience empowerment in the household domain. The Nagelkerke R square of 0.264 indicate that about 26.4 per cent of the amount of variation in the likelihood of being empowered in the household domain is explained by this model. The strong association between empowerment in the household domain and program benefit, in terms of material benefit and training, suggests the importance of program benefits, in either tangible or intangible form, towards empowerment in the household domain.

Data in the second part of Table 6.11 indicates that the likelihood of being empowered in the community domain is determined by two variables: the 'extent of participation in local organizations' of a respondent and 'downward accountability' of the

CPMU. The sign of the B value of these two predictors shows a positive relationship: the likelihood of a person experiencing empowerment in the community domain increases if they are the members of a greater number of local organizations and live in a commune where the CPMU is downwardly accountable to people. The Nagelkerke R square of 0.194 indicates that about 19.4 per cent of the amount of variation in the likelihood of being empowered in the community domain is explained by this model.

In the following sections, the relationships between empowerment and independent variables are further elaborated. The analysis mainly focuses on justifying and explaining the causal relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

6.4.1. Material Support

In this study, 'material support' was looked at in terms of the amount of material benefits a respondent received from the Chiase program. The result presented in Table 6.11 shows that, at a 95 per cent confidence level, empowerment in the household domain was positively correlated to the amount of material support a respondent received from the program. The concern here is the direction of the relationship between material support and empowerment.

The causal relationship between material support and people's empowerment is theoretically plausible. Theories of empowerment see the increased control over resources as a key component of empowerment (Sen G., 1997:2). The importance of material support toward empowerment has also been acknowledged in development literature (Osmani, 2000: 23; Vijalakshmi, 2002: 282), that is, material support from development programs can enhance economic security of the poor, which forms the basis for social mobilization to take place.

The findings from this study also support a causal relationship between material

benefits and people's empowerment. People's responses about change in agency (see Section 6.2) largely attributed empowerment to the material support given by the Chiase program. Specifically, for the changes in ability to 'handle household issues independently and efficiently' – one form of empowerment experienced by the local people - material support from the Chiase program is an important determinant. Further, as an 'explicit' poverty targeting was adopted in the Chiase program, the amount of material benefits a household was being given was largely determined by its destitution rather than its status of empowerment. This means that the probability of being empowered did not affect the amount of support a respondent received. Thus, the causal direction between 'material support' and empowerment in the household domain can be validly established.

6.4.2. Training

The variable 'training' was measured by the number of training courses a respondent attended. The training courses in the Chiase program largely focus on farming production skills, health care and gender equality. Logistic regression shows that, at a 95 per cent confidence level, empowerment in the household domain was positively correlated to the number of training courses a respondent had attended. Given that theories of empowerment largely see empowerment as a cognitive change process and the development of people's 'understanding of their needs' and 'the opportunities and constraints they face' (Korten, 1981b: 214; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988: 726), the causal relationship between training and empowerment is theoretically plausible. However, it is difficult to specify the time order, or in other words, the direction of this relationship. Given that most training courses in the Chiase program are held in the villages and open to all villagers, the number of training courses a person attends may be affected by the level of their empowerment - the dependent variable. That is, it is unclear whether empowered individuals are more likely to attend the training courses or the knowledge and skills

provided by training courses improve people's awareness and confidence.

Literature on research methodology (see Chapter Five) suggests that retrospective information and people's perception can be used to establish the causal direction. In this study, people's responses (see Section 6.2) largely attributed the change in their ability to 'influence household decisions' and to 'handle household issues independently and efficiently' to the improved production skills and social awareness acquired through the training courses. Thus the causal direction between training and empowerment in the household domain in this study can be established.

6.4.3. Participation in Local Organizations

The variable 'participation in local organizations' was measured by the number of local organizations of which a respondent was a member. Data analysis presented in Table 6.11 shows that, at a 95 per cent confidence level, the likelihood a person experiencing empowerment in the community domain was positively correlated to the extent of his/her participation in local organizations. Further, the causal direction between the extent of participation in local organizations of a respondent and his/her likelihood of being empowered in the community domain was established because the likelihood of being empowered did not affect people's membership in local organizations, at least in the short term. In addition, people's responses showed that the participation in local organizations, particularly Women's Union, Veterans' Association, and Farmers' Association, provided the members with better access to information, various government support, and better social skills, which facilitated their exercise of democratic rights devolved in the Chiase program and their achievement of empowerment in the community domain.

6.4.4. Downward Accountability of the CPMU

In this study, downward accountability of the CPMU is defined as its effectiveness in promoting the constituent's control over public decision-making and the implementation

of these decisions. The logistic regression analysis indicates that in the Chiase program, people's empowerment in the community domain was significantly co-related with the downward accountability of the CPMU, which is responsible for facilitating and monitoring all village activities. However, to infer accountability of the CPMU as a causal factor affecting people's empowerment is less robust because there may be an interrelationship between the two variables. That is, on one hand, the CPMU, which is highly downward accountable, may promote people's participation in decision-making and implementation of village activities and result in a higher rate of empowerment. On the other hand, a community with self-motivated individuals and a strong ability for collective action – which characterizes empowerment in the community domain - may be more successful in holding the CPMU downwardly accountable to it.

Qualitative analyses throw some light on this dilemma. Many people experiencing empowerment in the community domain, such as ability to 'influence community decisions', 'to query the local government officials', and 'to influence the construction of community works', referred to supports from the CPMU as a key factor of the change in their agency (see Section 6.2). In addition, the institutional analysis of democratic decentralization in the Chiase program (see Chapter Four) indicates that the accountability mechanisms enforcing the CPMU in the Chiase program is less effective[43], and therefore, it is unlikely that pressure from the local villages could increase the downward accountability of the CPMU. Thus, the role of downward accountability of the CPMU as a causal factor of people's empowerment in the community domain can be validly established.

---

[43] The analysis of three dimensions of democratic decentralization in the Chiase program – actors, distribution of powers, and accountability mechanisms – indicates that the accountability mechanisms enforcing the CPMU in this program are less effective.

6.4.5. Educational Attainment

The results show that the education level of the constituents had no significant association with their empowerment. This finding is somehow inconsistent with the conventional view, which sees education as a key resource for poverty alleviation and development. Some studies of poverty in Vietnam also attribute the persistence of poverty to low educational attainment (UNDP, 2001: 53-54; Vu, 2004: 230). This discrepancy can be explained by at least two factors. Income generating activities in the Chiase program are mostly related to livestock rearing and crop farming, which are relatively simple practices and do not require a high level of education. Further, all income generating activities include training sections which effectively provide people with needed knowledge and skills that diminish the significance of the education factor. This point is in part supported by Deshmukh-Ranadive (2006) who argues that '...formal education is not a necessary precondition for empowerment to take place' (p.114). However, the association between the two variables may also be masked by the small sample size.

6.4.6. Wealth Level

The findings showed that, in the Chiase program, the level of wealth of a person was not correlated with his/her empowerment in both household and community domains. The fact that there was no association between wealth level of households and empowerment outcome can be attributed to two reasons. First, people's responses of empowerment, as explored in Section 6.2, show that empowerment in the household domain is mostly attributed to program material benefits and training which are not dependent on the wealth level of the respondents. On the other hand, the 'explicit' poverty targeting mechanism, adopted by the Chiase program, seriously weakened the motivation for participation in collective action of many 'non-poor' people (see Section 6.3). This, to a considerable extent, impeded the empowerment in the community domain of this group of

people. Therefore, the negligible impact of the wealth level on empowerment in the Chiase program is, to some extent, predictable.

6.5. Conclusion

Three key findings have emerged from the research on empowerment in the Chiase program. First, empowerment was perceived by local people as improved performance in household and community. Empowerment in the household domain was characterized by the increase in 'personal power' - improved self-esteem, confidence and basic skills, while empowerment in the community domain is related to 'political power' – ability to exercise political action. Further, the elite were more likely to experience empowerment in the community domain while the non-elite were more likely to acquire empowerment in the household domain. Regarding empowerment in the community domain, the communes with more downwardly accountable CPMU tended to have a higher empowerment rate than the communes with less downwardly accountable CPMU.

Second, the program did create transformative changes in the people's representation in local decision-making and their social networks. This change had impacts at both individual and community levels: the community decisions were more relevant to local problems and people had better access to available resources and support provided by the government. However, program impact was to a considerable extent impeded by the inappropriate poverty targeting schemes and the lack of effective collective action.

Finally, logistic regression analysis found four factors significantly affecting empowerment. The amount of material support and training received was important to empowerment in the household domain, while the extent to which a respondent participated in local organizations and the downward accountability of the CPMU were all significant factors of empowerment in the community domain. These findings suggest a number of

measures to promote empowerment in the CDD approach which will be discussed in the next chapter.

This chapter has highlighted key findings about meaning and characteristics of empowerment induced by the Chiase program, the effectiveness of this program in empowering the poor, and factors having significant effects on the empowerment. Chapter Seven summarizes and discusses these findings in relation to the theoretical background of empowerment (Chapter Two) and the CDD approach (Chapter Three) in order to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the Chiase program in empowering poor people in the Vietnam context. The conclusions are presented in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of Research Findings

7.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the issues related to empowerment in the Chiase program that emerge from the findings presented in the preceding chapter. By relating these findings to the theoretical background outlined in Chapters Two and Three, as well as the context of Vietnam and characteristics of the Chiase program discussed in Chapter Four, this chapter aims to draw conclusions for the empowerment of the poor in the CDD approach in this country. It focuses on three themes. First, meaning of empowerment in the program, including people's perception of empowerment, implications for women's empowerment, implications for transformation in power relations, and the relationship between individual empowerment and collective empowerment, are discussed. Second, effectiveness of the Chiase program in transforming local power relations is assessed on the basis of two sources of analysis: the findings about the two poverty targeting mechanisms adopted by the program are related to literature on poverty targeting in order to identify the strengths and limitations of both; and the impacts of the program on people's participation in local decision-making and social networks are examined in order to highlight the achievements as well as identify factors impeding the performance of the program in this respect. Finally, the factors having a significant bearing on empowerment in this program will be highlighted.

7.2. Meaning of Empowerment in the Chiase Program

7.2.1. People's Perception of Empowerment in the Chiase Prgram

The change in people's agency in the Chiase program can be categorized into five forms: influencing household decisions, handling household issues independently and efficiently, influencing community decisions, querying local government officials, and

influencing the performance of community works. These forms of change in agency are directly related to performance in two important domains of life, household and community. This finding lends support to the view, which sees people's empowerment as improved access to and performance within important domains of life space (Vijalakshmi, 2002: 270-271), or the expansion of decision-making space (Jandhyala, 1998: 205). It also has resonance with theories of power (Bachrach and Barantz, 1970: 18; Lukes, 1974: 17), which argue that power can be exercised by confining an individual decision-making space. As the empowerment in this program was characterized by improvements in people's performance in the household and community domains of life, the denial or limitation of access to and performance within these domains is disempowering. This confirms the close relationship between disempowerment and exclusion and voicelessness, which are key dimensions of poverty; and thus, supports the dominant view in poverty reduction discourse, that is, empowerment is not only as the means but also an end with regard to poverty reduction (Narayan *et al.*, 2000: 31; World Bank, 2001: 15).

Examination of the respondents' perception of empowerment showed that local people experienced empowerment personally and contextually. Facilitating factors, such as the devolution policies and training activities, or inhibiting factors, such as the demands on the participants' time, caused different impacts on different groups of local people and led to different forms of empowerment. For example, respondents having little experience of interacting with people outside their families or involving political processes were likely to develop their confidence and self-esteem with peers, and in situations close to home. Other respondents, with existing experience of some sort of leadership and political actions, also developed confidence and self-esteem but for them these processes were likely to be manifested in their involvement in political processes and interaction with higher level

officials or more experienced leaders. This finding are in line with the views holding that empowerment is contextual (Speer, 2000: 52) and subtle (Murthy, 2001: 350), and thus, justify the use of subjective measurement of empowerment in this study.

The responses also showed that empowerment in the Chiase program involved changes in ability to influence decision-making at both community and household levels. 'Non-elite' people were more likely to experience empowerment in the household domain through gaining 'personal power', which resulted in more equal domestic relationships, independence and efficiency of the households. On the other hand, the 'elite' were more likely to acquire empowerment in the community domain, characterized by increased 'political power', or in other words, an improvement in the ability to influence the allocation of community resources.

The existence of two separate types of empowerment with distinguished characteristics and implications for power relations in the Chiase program suggests that empowerment in the Chiase program has a broader meaning than the conception of Max Weber (1947) of power as 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests' (p.139), which refers exclusively to political power. This study also lends support to a broader view of empowerment suggested by Schneider (1999: 524), which sees this concept as 'the gaining of strength in the various ways necessary to be able to move out of poverty. ... [they] include knowledge, education, organization, rights and `voice', financial and material resources'; and Uphoff's (2005: 232) argument of strategy for the empowerment of the poor, which involves two components: directly enhancing poor people's respective assets and capabilities, and establishing assets and capabilities at a higher level of decision-making.

7.2.2. Implications for the Transformation of Power Relations

As discussed in Chapter Three, the poor are engaged in two 'uppers-lowers' relations: with the rich and with political patrons (Chambers, 1995: 42). The implications for transforming these power relations in the Chiase program are reflected through people's responses regarding changes in agency in Chapter Six. Two forms of change in, 'ability to influence community decisions', and 'ability to query the government officials', are directly related to the power relations between the local people and the political patrons – the commune officials and local leaders. The improvements in 'ability to influence community decisions' simultaneously increased people's representation in community decision-making, which resulted in more relevant community decisions, as found in Chapter Six. The changes in 'ability to query the government officials' gave people better access to information and enhanced their leverage in the policies of local government. The above changes indicated that the commune-level officials became more responsive and had more respect for the local people. Obviously, the power relations between the 'lowers' and the 'uppers' have become more equal though it does not mean that the two parties have equal power in implementing the development activities.

On the other hand, no respondents referred to a change in the relationship between the poor and the local employers and creditors. Through the implementation of the Chiase program, while the local people significantly increase their 'voice' in public decision-making and become more confident in dealing with the political patrons, they still see the better-off as an important source of support, mainly for employment and credit. Though the assistance of the Chiase is very significant, it covers a small section of population and is insufficient for diverse demand of the local people. This suggests that changing the power relation between the rich and the poor as proposed by Chambers (1995: 42) is difficult and perhaps, not feasible for CDD programs with fixed time-frame and clearly-defined structure

and objectives like the Chiase.

7.2.3. Implication for Women's Empowerment

Positive impacts on women's empowerment were recorded as a good number of female respondents had reported significant changes in agency through the implementation of the Chiase program, particularly in the household domain. Every form of change in agency (see Chapter 6) included female respondents though the number of women experiencing empowerment in the community domain was much lower than that of male respondents. Regarding four spaces important to women's empowerment, that is, physical, economic, socio-cultural, and political (see Chapter Two), the responses regarding the changes in agency (see Chapter Six) indicated that the Chiase program mainly empowered the local women through expanding their economic and political spaces. However, the impacts on private political space are much stronger than those on public political space. These findings indicate the good potential of the Chiase program in empowering the women while at the same time, lending support to the Deshmukh-Ranadive's (2006: 112) argument about the difficulty in developing public political space for the women.

The empowerment of the women in the Chiase was to some extent constrained. While Deshmukh-Ranadive's (2006: 114) identifies two avenues to develop women's cognitive space: bringing the women together in collectives organized around issues of their concern, and providing information about legal processes, human rights and entitlements, only the latter was promoted in the Chiase. It can be expected that, if cooperative economic activities are further promoted, the empowerment impacts will be substantially improved.

7.2.4. Individual and Collective Empowerment in the Chiase

People's responses about changes in their agency showed that there is a relationship between individual and collective empowerment. On the one hand, the change in individual

agency directly influenced collective processes in the Chiase program, that is, empowered individuals directly impacted the performance of collective and political processes in the villages, such as village development planning and implementation of community works. On the other hand, village meetings in the program gave people 'voice' and access to a wide range of information, which was important for them to 'influence community decisions' or 'query the government officials'. This finding supports the notion that there is a feedback loop between individual and collective empowerment in the theory of empowerment (Drury and Reicher, 1999: 383; Kroeker, 1996: 124; Rissel, 1994: 39; Speer, 2000: 59). It also supports the notion that agency and power have a collective dimension (Giddens, 1979: 69).

However, the collective dimension of empowerment in the Chiase program was limited. People's responses showed that the only form of collective action that facilitated individual empowerment in the Chiase was the village meeting which was formally held during steps of the LPMD cycle for different purposes: planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of village activities. There was no cooperative economic activity in the study villages as all income generating activities were implemented at household level. In organizing the training courses, the study villages had no activity aimed specifically at building the village solidarity. Most of activities involving the improvement of small-scaled infrastructure works were contracted out to professional contractors , and therefore, had no significant effect on local people's capacities or cohesion among them. In addition, the inappropriateness of the poverty targeting policies further worsened the sense of cohesion between the villagers. As a result, while theories of empowerment recognize two mechanisms through which the group can affect individual empowerment - the group gives voice and support to the members; and the group itself increases the member's sense of

empowerment (Drury and Reicher, 1999: 383; Pilisuk *et al.*, 1996: 17) - this study found that, during the implementation of the Chiase program, only the first mechanism took place. In responding to question about change in agency, while many respondents attributed their empowerment to increased 'voice' or access to information through village meetings, no one referred to the social aspect of collective processes, such as community cohesion, solidarity or sense of belonging to the community. This finding indicates the limitations of collective empowerment in the Chiase program. This point will be returned to in the next section.

7.3. Effectiveness of the Chiase Program in Transforming Local Power Relations

As illustrated in Chapter Three, the effectiveness of the Chiase program in transforming local power relations is characterized by the improvements in the people's participation in local decision-making and social networks. The transformation is also significantly affected by the performance of poverty targeting mechanisms. This section focuses on three issues: effectiveness of poverty targeting mechanisms in reaching the poor and their attendant effects on people's participation and community cohesion; improvement in people's participation in local decision-making which involves the level of participation, the extent of participation, and the outcome of participation; enhancement in people's social networks involving the examination of people's networks and assessment of change in people's networks.

7.3.1. Poverty Targeting in the Chiase Program

In the CDD approach, the performance of poverty targeting is important because it can affect not only the economic security of people but also their mobilization and community solidarity (Dupar and Badenoch, 2002: 22; Osmani, 2000: 23). Therefore, to understand the transformative effects on power relations of a development program, the analysis of poverty targeting mechanism is essential. This study found that both poverty

targeting mechanisms adopted by the Chiase program were problematic, which significantly affected the empowerment of the poor in this program.

In the period 2004-2005, a community-based poverty targeting[44] mechanism was used in the study villages. While community-based poverty targeting had the advantage of superior information, it relies on an arbitrary judgment of the local people, rather than a clearly-defined system of criteria. As shown in section 6.3.1, under this targeting scheme, income generating activities tended to provide program benefits to all villagers though priority was still being given to the poor. This finding about the shortcoming of community-based poverty targeting in this study is in line with Bergeron *et al.*'s (1998: 1989-1901) conclusion regarding the context of an agricultural development project in Honduras, which argues that food security ranking by the local informant was unreliable. In Chiase other project components, however, including infrastructure improvement, training on skills and knowledge, healthcare, and improvement of production methods, benefited all members of the local communities. While it is difficult to quantify the amount of benefit gained by each household, the distribution of benefits seemed relatively equal as the majority of the respondents revealed that all activities implemented in their villages were relevant to local situations (see Table 6.8).

The failure of community-based poverty targeting in preventing the leaking of income generating funds to non-targeted groups could be attributed to the fact that the local preference favored the distribution of program resources to both the 'poor' and 'non-poor' households, rather than directing available resources to the poorest. The majority of local people believed that it was fair to let all villagers access the income-generating funds, though priority could be given to the poor. This finding is to some extent expected as it has

[44] Details of 'community-based poverty targeting' in Chiase are discussed in Chapter Six.

resonance with some past studies. Chan *et al.* (1992: 189) reported the failure of social welfare programs in China in targeting the childless elderly; and King (1997: 361) also found that local preferences for poverty relief varied considerably among the local communities during implementation of the Poor Law in England. This discussion lends support to Conning and Kevene (2002: 384), who argue that the understandings of social justice and poverty may vary among communities and differ from those of a national welfare agency.

In the second period, 2006-2007, the Chiase program adopted a government-based poverty targeting[45] mechanism which was characterized by two key characteristics: only formally-identified 'poor' households were eligible to access program benefits; the 'poor' households were identified by the CPC and, based on the list of 'poor' households, beneficiaries for specific activities were selected. This 'explicit targeting' mechanism considerably weakened the motivation for participation in collective action of many non-poor households and the cohesion between local people as, explored in Chapter Six.

The adoption of this 'explicit' poverty targeting mechanism is problematic at both conceptual and practical levels. At a conceptual level, a question can be raised: as the non-poor in a poor community may still be quite poor as compared to national or regional distribution, should they be totally excluded from income generating opportunities? This point is shared by Chase and Woolcock who reasonably questioned the ability of the most destitute in leading the development of a society:

> If the history of progressive politics in the developed world is any indication, social change is unlikely to emerge from pressures by societies' most destitute. Rather, change is likely to be promoted by those of middle status seeking to exert what they consider to be their rightful degree of influence against traditional, entrenched elites

[45] Details of the government-based targeting mechanism in the Chiase are presented in chapter Six.

who maintain their authority through long-standing social norms (Chase and Woolcock, 2005: 11).

Therefore, it can be expected that the exclusion of non-poor from income generating component is likely to decrease the efficiency and sustainability of economic development activities, and thus affect the overall development of the communities. This point is also supported by the finding of Dupar and Badenoch (2002) about poverty targeting in the Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Program, which contends that 'the exclusion of wealthier households from receiving direct support precluded the formulation of holistic plans that would be socially and ecologically sustainable' (p.22). Further, at a practical level, the identification of 'poor' households by local government is less legitimate to the local people. Though both government-based and Community-based assessment of poverty may have errors, the use of local knowledge in Community-based assessment ensures that it is seen as more legitimate by local people.

The above discussion of poverty targeting schemes also explains a point raised in the previous section: the limited collective empowerment in the Chiase program. Raising discontent among the 'non-poor' households must have considerably affected community cohesion and impeded cooperative activities. Therefore, the limitations of collective empowerment in the Chiase program can be attributed to division within the communities: as warned by Drury and Reicher (1999: 398) '...[the] crowd may become more divided during the course of events and actually feel disempowered'.

What emerges from the above discussion is the importance of an appropriate poverty targeting mechanism which can accurately deliver resources to the most destitute people without causing much discontent among non-targeted groups. A useful suggestion is proposed by Conning and Kevene:

> The best community targeting outcomes are likely to be achieved within hybrid systems which allow for significant local community agent discretion but also stipulate clear rules and targeting guidelines and which keep local agents accountable through external auditing and evaluation, and institutions such as mandatory public meetings, and competition among groups for contracts and elected office (Conning and Kevene, 2002: 388).

7.3.2. Impacts on People's participation in local decision-making

The Chiase program created a substantial change in the level of people's participation in study communities. Before the implementation of the Chiase program, people's participation in local decision-makingwas promoted at varying levels – information sharing, consultation, supervision, and decision-making – depending on the issues in question. Participation at decision-making level was only mobilized for collective action relying on local contribution and for the approval of village conventions. The Chiase program involved local people in decision-making governing all aspects of village development which effectively gave them the right to directly influence all community decisions. All village issues were decided by the local villagers themselves through the village meeting mechanism, which features a significant improvement in the political power of the local people. With regard to the typology of participation (Arnstein, 1969: 217; Pretty, 1995: 1252), people's participation in the Chiase program can be characterized at a level of consultation and partnership, indicating the empowering nature of this program.

The extent to which people participated in local decision-making, measured by attendance rate and activeness in meetings, was also better. However, there was a significant difference between the 'elite', 'middle', and 'poor' groups. Generally, the 'elite' were the most active group in village meetings while the 'middle' and the 'poor' were more passive. The passivity of local people in village meetings was attributed to three reasons:

'attitude of dependence', 'lack of information and social skills', and 'lack of motivation'. Notably, while 'attitude of dependence' and 'lack of information and social skills' are related to deep-seated constraints of the local poor people, 'lack of motivation' was a direct impact of the 'explicit' poverty targeting policy adopted by the Chiase program.

The limitations of the local people in terms of direct participation in decision-making are predictable, being widely acknowledged in development literature (Johnson, 2001: 525; Korten, 1981a: 191; Oakley *et al.*,1991: 13). The asymmetrical performance in village meetings between the 'elite' and 'non-elite' is explained by Fung and Wright (2001: 33): people enter decision-making process from unequal positions of power, such as asymmetrical social positions, different access to material resources, and different levels of political knowledge. Oakley *et al.* (1991: 13) and Korten (1981a: 191) also highlight dependency and lack of organizational skill as common problems in participatory development. This finding highlights the importance of facilitation in the CDD approach.

The "lack of motivation' resulted from the exclusion of the 'non-poor' households from acquiring program material benefits. This was quite understandable as an economic benefit was an important motive of people's participation in the study villages. The finding lends support to the arguments of White (1996) about the importance of people's interest in participation: 'People's enthusiasm for a project depends much more on whether they have a genuine interest in it than in whether they participated in its construction' (p.14). This indicates that creating an effective incentives system, which fits people's interest is of importance for the success of the CDD programs.

However, the active participation of the elite in village decision-making should not be associated with 'elite capture' as it provided positive outcomes for the local communities. The thesis found that through the implementation of the Chiase program,

village decisions became more relevant to the local problems and needs. While 'elite capture' is commonly mentioned as a tenacious threat in decentralization initiatives, the results seemed to suggest it did not occur in the Chiase program as community decisions were largely seen as more relevant to local problems. This in part has resonance with Dasgupta and Beard's (2007) findings about 'benevolent' elite in a CDD program in Indonesia which highlight the important distinction between 'elite control' and 'elite capture' (p.244). This discussion points to the advantage of broad-based participation and democratic governance promoted in the Chiase program: it can create opportunities and political space necessary to redress elite capture problem in community driven development processes. This is a great potential of the CDD approach in attacking poverty, whose merit is explained by Uphoff (2005): 'Resources of richer persons can possibly be co-opted to improve the situation of poorly endowed persons' (p.234). In this study, this view of Uphoff was authenticated by many people's narratives claiming that they participated in village meetings with a view to securing community resources, enforcing social equity, or advancing community development.

The thesis also found that people's participation in the Chiase program was mainly driven by instrumental motives including tangible and intangible benefits at both individual and community levels, such as individual material benefits, productive skills, access to information, and resources for community development. This suggests that to mobilize and sustain people's participation, access to resources is essential. This is in line with Gita Sen's (1997) argument about the importance of material resources for empowerment: 'Programs which start by raising people's consciousness but are unable to deliver greater control over material resources, can lead to frustration and high dropout rates' (p.2).

The above discussion indicates that, through the implementation of the Chiase

program, people's participation in local decision-making was substantially enhanced and community empowerment, defined as the combination of three components of a raised level of psychological empowerment, enhanced participation in political action, and a redistribution of decision-making authority favorable to the community (Rissel, 1994: 41) was also achieved. Though the extent of participation of the 'non-elite' still lagged behind that of the elite, the institutional settings of the Chiase program allowed for more inclusive and relevant cooperative decisions to be made. It can be expected that, if poverty targeting is better managed and people's capabilities are improved, the impacts on people's participation and community empowerment would be achieved to a further extent. This finding strongly supports the argument that the CDD approach is an effective mechanism for empowering the poor people and communities (Chebil and Haque, 2003: 120; Dongier *et al.*, 2001: 308).

7.3.3. Impacts on People's Networks

The research found that, generally, the local people relied on four sources of support: external agency officials; commune officials and village leaders; local employers and creditors; and relatives and friends. The relationships with these actors form the social networks of the local people. Interestingly, there is a marked difference between the networks of the 'elite' and that of the 'non-elite'. 'Elite' households mostly relied on their relatives and friends and when approaching government support, they tended to go outside the locality to seek assistance from external agencies, which provided greater benefits than the commune government did. Conversely, the 'non-elite' groups saw the commune-level officials and village leaders as the most important source of support while local employers and traders were also important sources of support for these groups. Relationships with friends and relatives were relatively less important to the 'non-elite' than to the 'elite', perhaps due to the fact that the friends and relatives of the poor were also poor and their

ability to support was limited as well. This finding lends support to both Harris' (2001) and Rao and Walton's (2004) arguments that social networks are an aspect of the differentiation of classes in a social system (Harris, 2001: 115), and they can contribute to inequality because the elites 'are able to access internal and external social networks that are more powerful and wealthy' (Rao and Walton, 2004: 16), while the poor have less influential networks which restrict the resources they can mobilize.

The Chiase program created significant impacts on people's networks with commune-level officials. As local officials are the most important source of support of the 'non-elite', this change implied a significant improvement in their networks, which resulted in improvements in their access to various benefits. In addition, improvement in social networks with external agency officials was also achieved, but to a much lesser extent. With regard to the changes in 'uppers-lowers' relationships that characterize transformation as put forward by Chambers (1995: 33), the program significantly changed the relationship between local people and political patrons through making these intermediaries more responsive and approachable to people, and as discussed in previous section, making local decision-making more relevant and inclusive. People's networks with relatives and friends were slightly weakened due mainly to the rising discontent about how program benefits were distributed. This is an important source of support for local people and the weakening of this type of network must have affected their well-being. Obviously, a more appropriate poverty targeting scheme is required to facilitate empowerment in the CDD approach.

The program did not affect the dependency relationship between the poor people and the local employers and traders. Although through the implementation of the Chiase, the poor had better access to credit for the enhancement of productive assets and living facilities, employment and credit from the local employers and traders were still important

sources of support for them. Poor people remained dependent on the local better-off and suffered from unfavorable terms in dealing with these actors. This indicates that, through the implementation of the Chiase program, the 'upper-lower' relation between the better-offs and the poor did not significantly alter.

7.4. Factors Affecting Empowerment in the Chiase Program

The findings about the factors that are significantly correlated with empowerment outcomes are important to the discourse on empowerment in the CDD approach. The factors, on the one hand, suggest how the CDD programs should be designed and implemented in the context of rural Vietnam. On the other hand, they contribute to theoretical understandings of the CDD approach.

7.4.1. Downward Accountability of the CPMU

This study found that in the Chiase program, the empowerment outcome was significantly correlated with the downward accountability of the CPMU, which was responsible for monitoring and facilitating village activities. This correlation supports theories of accountability, which holds that accountability denotes a specific type of power: the capacity to demand someone to be answerable for past actions, and/or the capacity to impose a sanction for poor performance (Goetz and Jenkins, 2002: 5); and 'lack of accountability ... is synonymous with the lack of power' (Day and Klein, 1987: 21). That is, in the CDD approach, when a government body is accountable to the people, it gives them some power, and the process of holding this body to be accountable to people is an empowering process.

This finding about the importance of downward accountability of a public body has resonance with some other studies looking at the role of downward accountability in different contexts of development practice. Smith-Sreen (1995: 260), who looked at the effectiveness of development NGOs at grassroots level in India, claimed that the extent of

accountability to members within development organizations was strongly related to the benefits received by members from the development activities. This means that greater member-accountability within grassroots organizations is likely to yield higher benefits for members. More relevant to empowerment, Kilby (2006b: 960) studied fifteen development NGOs in India and found that the downward accountability of these NGOs was strongly correlated with empowerment outcomes for poor women – the beneficiaries of those NGOs. In democratic local governance[46], Blair (2000: 21), looked at six relatively successful case countries, and identified two related conditions that are essential for the success of this strategy: the participation of the local people must be extensive, and the accountability of the governors to the governed must be ensured. The contribution of this study is to confirm the relationship between 'downward accountability' of the local government and the empowerment effects on the constituents in the context of a CDD program in Vietnam.

The correlation between downward accountability of the CPMU and empowerment outcome indicates the ineffectiveness of accountability mechanisms enforcing the CPMU. This finding, though indicative rather than representative, is strongly supported by other sources of analysis. The analysis of democratic decentralization in the Chiase program (Chapter Four) indicates that the weak sanctioning power of the local villagers may result in a disincentive for the CPMU to be downwardly accountable. The finding is also supported by Fritzen's (2002) analysis of the implementation of grassroots democratization in Vietnam:

> The grassroots level is not yet well organized to demand participatory processes.

[46] Democratic Local Governance is a development strategy which combines the devolutionary form of decentralization – in which real authority and responsibility are transferred to local bodies - with democracy at the local level.

> Information on rights and program investments is typically inadequate, previous experiences are often non-participatory (giving rise to mistrust of, or indifference to, upper level campaigns), and social organization via state channels (e.g. mass organizations) may be quite weak in some of the poorest areas of the country (p.18).

The above discussion points to the importance of devising effective accountability mechanisms enforcing public body acting as partner in the CDD approach if empowering the poor is the goal of this development approach. Blair (2000: 31), through a study of Democratic Local Governance in six countries, suggests a number of useful accountability mechanisms: election, political party, civil society, media, public meeting, formal procedures and opinion survey. The design of accountability mechanisms can be based on Blair's (2000) suggestion: 'Any one or two of these mechanisms, even if effectively operating, seems unlikely to promise sustainable accountability... they can be mixed and matched in a variety of combinations' (p.35). In addition, Agrawal and Ribot (1999: 479) proposed a long, but by no means exhaustive, list of possible measures: procedures for recall; referenda; monitoring by media and NGOs; auditing and evaluation; public reporting by government; community education; embeddedness of leaders in communities; changes in the belief system of leader and community; performance awards; social movements; and government oversight of lower levels of government.

As the downward accountability of the CPMU is a significant factor in the empowerment outcomes for the people, a tension between the lines of accountability of the CPMU should have important implications for empowerment in the CDD approach. While poverty reduction is often the central goal of CDD programs, the poverty targeting preference of local communities may not be the same as that of the program authority, and that is often the case in poor communities. Therefore, there is a tension between downward accountability for people's expectation of the public body and its accountability to the

principal. This tension can considerably affect the performance of the public body, and thus, the empowerment impacts of the CDD programs. Thus, it is important for the CDD programs to balance the poverty targeting goal and community preference.

7.4.2. Participation in Local Organizations

The finding about the significant correlation between people's participation in local organizations – measured through their membership in local organizations - and their empowerment can be explained both by theories of empowerment and the political context of Vietnam villages. On one hand, theory of empowerment argues that a group can give its members organizational resources, say coordination and communication; and a sense of power develops in the course of collective actions (Drury and Reicher, 1999: 383; Pilisuk *et al.*, 1996: 17-18). On the other hand, local organizations in rural Vietnam are predominantly socio-political organizations which are formally recognized as part of the political system. Therefore, joining the local organizations often gives the member some political power – ability to influence community political processes. In addition, through joining local organizations, the members can enhance their social and political skills, such as public speaking and conflict resolution, which are important for their performance in the Chiase activities.

This finding is in line with empirical studies that find a relationship between membership in dominant social groups and participation in civil community development activities, which features an important dimension of empowerment (Beard, 2005: 36; Isham and Kahkonen, 2002: 679). This reflects the importance of people's participation in local organizations toward their empowerment in the CDD approach which points to two key findings. First, the higher number of local organizations a person takes membership in, the better chance he/she experience empowerment through the implementation of the CDD

programs. The second implication is that the stronger the existing local organizations the more significant empowerment impacts created by the CDD programs, that is, the CDD is more likely to be successful in areas where strong local organizations exist.

Therefore, the strength of the existing local organizations should be an important concern in designing and implementing CDD projects. Presently, in rural areas of Vietnam, where civil society is still under-developed, the most influential local organizations include the Fatherland Front, Women's Union, Farmers' Association, Veterans' Association and Youth Union. While on one hand, these organizations should be seen as important partners and mobilization of them should be a key strategy of the CDD projects, on the other hand, as all of these local organizations are part of political system in Vietnam and being established for the purpose of mobilizing mass population to support the Party's policies, their ability to monitor the local government is limited. In this context promoting the development of civil society can be an effective supplement to these existing political structures. In addition, the formation of new local groups and the implementation of cooperative activities are also of great importance for people's empowerment.

Another implication is that the development of local organizations should be an important factor to be considered in scaling up the CDD approach. In Vietnam, as the strength and influence of local organizations vary substantially between regions, between the Kinh and other minority groups, the adoption of the CDD must be based on a careful analysis of the situation of each project area. A rigid model of the CDD approach may be not effective for all areas in the country.

7.4.3. Material Benefit and Training

People's responses showed that material support and training in the Chiase program directly affected their access to assets, basic skills, awareness and information, which

resulted in an increase in a sense of confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, the finding about the correlation between empowerment and the two factors 'amount of material benefit the respondent receives' and 'number of training courses the respondent attends' indicate the importance of access to assets and capabilities at individual level in empowering poor people. This also shows that empowerment is not necessarily related to political power, referring to the capacity to act at community level.

This finding is a testament to the strategy for empowerment of the poor put forward by Uphoff (2005: 232), which specifies two measures to help people achieve what they need and desire: directly enhancing poor people's respective assets and capabilities, and establishing assets and capabilities at higher levels of decision-making. It is also supported by the views of empowerment acknowledging multiple avenues to empowerment as 'the gaining of strength in various ways necessary to be able to move out of poverty' rather than focusing purely on political change (Osmani, 2000: 23; Schneider, 1999: 524). In the same vein, Gita Sen (1997) argues that empowerment includes both components: intrinsic transformation and extrinsic control of resources. For her, both components are important and she argues that 'programs which starts by raising people's consciousness but are unable to deliver greater control over material resources, can lead to frustration and high drop-out rates' (p.2). Korten (1981b) also supports the approach to empowerment which relies on cognitive change by arguing that helping the poor to develop an 'understanding of their needs' and 'the opportunities and constraints they face' is critical to people's self-development (p.214).

7.5. Conclusion

Four key points have emerged from the research on empowerment in the Chiase program. The first point involves key characteristics of the empowerment in this program. It is found that empowerment is characterized by improved performance in household and

community domains. Empowerment involves not only improvements in individual assets and capabilities but also the enhancement of capacity to act at higher decision-making levels. Further, while the program has a potential to transform local power relations, its collective processes are to a considerable extent constrained.

Second, the designs of poverty targeting schemes have important implications for empowerment in the CDD approach. Both community-based and government-based 'explicit' targeting schemes in the Chiase program are problematic, with significant effects on empowerment in the program. The limitations of collective processes in the program in part can be attributed to raising discontent due to inappropriate targeting policies. Therefore, devising an appropriate poverty targeting mechanism is of importance to the success of the CDD programs.

Third, the transformation of power relations has been achieved through the improvements in the people's participation in local decision-making and social networks. Through the implementation of the Chiase program, the level and extent of people's participation are enhanced, and people's networks with the political intermediaries are improved, which results in more relevant and inclusive community decision-making and better access to government support. Remarkably, while people's networks reflect class differentiation, the program improves the key networks of the 'non-elite', which shows its effectiveness in transforming local power relations.

Finally, the key factors that affect empowerment are the amount of material benefit, number of training courses, participation in local organizations, and downward accountability of the CPMU. The importance of this finding is twofold as it contributes to the understanding of empowerment and suggests measures to promote the empowerment outcomes of the CDD program in Vietnam.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

The goal of this thesis has been to examine the effectiveness of the CDD approach in empowering the poor in the socio-political context of Vietnam. This has been facilitated through a study of the Chiase program comprising three components of analysis: the meaning of empowerment in the Chiase program and its implications for the transformation of power relations; the effectiveness of the program in transforming local power relations including the examination of poverty targeting schemes in this program; and the factors significantly affecting empowerment in this program. This chapter summarizes the strengths, limitations, and tensions of this program in empowering the poor, and suggests a number of recommendations for promoting the empowerment of the poor in this development approach in Vietnam.

Four groups of findings are described in this study. First, the thesis finds that, empowerment, as people perceived, involves both change in access to assets and capabilities as well as the achievement of political power. The thesis also finds that while the program has a potential to transform power relations and empower women, the collective dimensions of empowerment in the Chiase program have been, however, impeded. Second, both poverty targeting schemes, adopted by this program, are problematic which has resulted in unfavorable consequences empowerment effects. Third, the Chiase program is effective in transforming local power relations through improving people's political representation and social networks. The transformation is characterized by more inclusive and responsive local decision-making and increased connection between people and the local government officials. The fourth finding of this study, relating to the key factors that affect empowerment and their implications for the implementation of the

CDD in Vietnam, are discussed in the following section.

8.2. Meaning of Empowerment in the Chiase Program

Characteristics of empowerment in the Chiase program were explored through examining the respondents' narratives of the important changes in their agency defined as the range of choices and ability to exercise them. People's responses show that the changes in people's agency can take multiple forms featuring their performance in and access to household and community domains. Empowerment in the household domain is characterized by more equal domestic relationships, independence and efficiency of the households, while empowerment in the community domain is characterized by the increase in ability to influence community decision-making and political processes. Changes in both household and community domains are valued by local people and empowerment in this program is conceptualized by local people as various ways of gaining access to assets and capabilities to exercise strategic life choices. This, in part, justifies the methodology of this study, which relied on subjective measurement of empowerment.

This finding is important in that it points to the importance of not only political power, but also material assets and capabilities at individual level in empowering the poor. Therefore, in line with Schneider (1999: 524) and Uphoff's (2005: 232), this thesis has argued that interventions aimed at empowering the poor should focus on both individual assets and capabilities as well as capacity to act at higher decision-making levels. This argument also supports the World Bank's approach to empowerment, which involves 'expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives' (World Bank, 2002: 11).

In addition, it is found that the elite are more likely to achieve empowerment

through gaining political power, defined as ability to influence the allocation of community resources, while the empowerment of the non-elite is mostly characterized by the increase in personal power known as an improved sense of self-efficacy, awareness, and basic skills. Therefore, reversing uppers-lowers relationship between the elite and non-elite, as suggested by Chambers (1995: 42), may be unrealistic in the CDD approach. However, positive outcomes in the other 'uppers-lowers' relationship between the local political patrons and people were recorded.

People's responses also show the achievements as well as limitations of this program. The impacts of the Chiase program on women's empowerment are significant, and mainly achieved through expanding economic and political spaces of the local women. However, the impacts of this program must have been considerably constrained due to the absence of collective economic activities – the key factor facilitating women's cognitive space as identified by Deshmukh-Ranadive's (2006: 112). The program also creates a transformative change in the power relations between the people and the commune-level officials through increasing people's 'ability to influence community decisions' and 'ability to query the government officials', which results in more responsive officials and a more relevant community decision-making. However, change in the relationships between the poor and the rich was not achieved. Finally, though the notion of feedback loop between collective and individual empowerment is supported in the Chiase, the impacts of collective processes on individual empowerment are limited. That is, while village meetings in the program can provide people with organizational resources, such as 'voice' and better access to information, they do not improve the cohesion among local people or people' sense of belonging to the village. This finding points to a limitations of collective empowerment in this program, which will be returned to in the next section.

8.3. Poverty Targeting in the Chiase Program

Being a poverty reduction intervention, poverty targeting is a key process in the Chiase program. Two different targeting mechanisms were adopted by the program in two periods 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. In the first period, a Community-based poverty targeting[47] mechanism was used, which involved the local community as the intermediary agent solely responsible for defining eligibility, selecting the beneficiaries, and implementing the delivery of benefits. In the second period, a government-based 'explicit' targeting mechanism was adopted which maintains that only formally-identified 'poor' households are eligible to access program material benefits. The Commune People's Committee is involved to identify the 'poor' household based on household income and MOLISA poverty line, while the local communities are involved to identify beneficiaries of specific activities from the pre-defined list of 'poor' households.

Both of the poverty targeting mechanisms adopted by the Chiase program have problems. Community-based poverty targeting is not based on clearly-defined eligibility and, therefore, is sensitive to the local preference for poverty targeting. In the case of the Chiase program, as the local preference favors the distribution of material resources to both poor and non-poor households, this targeting scheme fails to prevent the leaking of development funds to the non-targeted groups. This indicates that the superior information of the community-based mechanism does not necessarily result in better targeting effects. It suggests that, in poverty reduction programs, it seems to be unrealistic to expect that a poor community, where most residents are relatively poor, would voluntarily direct all material resources to a small group of its residents – the 'poor' group. The belief that community-based poverty targeting would necessarily enhance the targeting effects of poverty reduction programs appears to be naïve.

---

[47] Details of 'community-based poverty targeting' in the Chiase are discussed in Chapter Six.

On the other hand, the amended government-based 'explicit' targeting mechanism can be challenged on a number of grounds. The exclusion of the 'non-poor' from accessing material benefits results in rising discontentment among these households, which seriously weakens both community cohesion and the motivation of 'non-poor' people. Further, poverty assessment undertaken by the local government is often inconsistent with people's perception of poverty, which further increases their discontent. In addition, the 'non-poor' in a poor community may still be quite poor as compared to national or regional poverty distribution, and excluding them from benefiting from program resources may be unfair.

8.4. Transformation of Local Power Relations through the Chiase Program

Theories of empowerment indicate that empowerment of the poor must be characterized by transformation in local power relations. One realistic way to analyze the transformation of power relations is to examine the creation of 'political capabilities' of the poor, defined as the ability to 'create new rules, transform social preferences, as well as secure new resources as they become available' (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999: 7). In the CDD approach, 'political capabilities' of the poor can be developed through enhancing people's political representation and social networks. In this study, transformation in power relations has been analyzed through examining the changes in people's participation in local decision-making and their social networks.

The Chiase program has substantially improved both the level and extent of people's participation in local decision-making. Under the Chiase program, the scope of issues to be decided by the local communities was much broadened as compared to the previous period. Local people were also more willing to attend meetings and more active in discussing village issues. This improvement in people's political representation has resulted in an increased inclusiveness and relevance of community decisions.

However, improvements in people's participation were, to a considerable extent, inhibited by three factors: 'attitude of dependence'; 'lack of social skills and information'; and 'lack of motivation'. The first two factors are related to deep-seated constraints of the poor people and have been widely recognized in participatory development (Johnson, 2001: 525; Korten, 1981a: 193; Oakley *et al.*, 1991: 13), while the last factor is a result of the inappropriate poverty targeting policy of this program. The finding suggests that to promote the empowerment of the poor through the CDD approach, an effective system of support and facilitation for the poor's participation and an appropriate poverty targeting mechanism are required.

In addition, the thesis finds that people mostly participate for instrumental purposes, and access to resources is essential to sustain their participation. This finding suggests the importance of material resources in the CDD approach. Therefore, to maintain and further develop the empowerment impacts of the Chiase program after it ceases, incorporating village planning into the formal state-funded development planning system is essential.

Social networks of the local people were analyzed through examining important sources of support that their well-being has relied on. Generally, local people's networks comprise relationships with four groups of actors: 'external agencies'; 'commune officials and village leaders'; 'local employers and creditors'; and 'relatives and friends'. This study finds that there is a significant difference between social networks of the 'elite' and those of the 'non-elite': for the former, 'relatives and friends' are the most important sources of support, while the latter rely mainly on the 'commune-level officials and village leaders', and 'local employers and creditors', as the most important sources of support. The 'elite' also relied on government support but they mostly sought assistance from external agencies which provided more benefits than the commune-level governments. This indicates that

networks are part of power relations in a social system and can contribute to inequality, as the elite can access powerful and wealthy networks while the poor have fewer influential networks, which provide limited resources.

Through the implementation of the Chiase program, the networks between local people with the commune-level officials and the external agencies were significantly improved, while their networks with relatives and friends were slightly degraded, and their relationships with local employers remained unchanged. Since the commune-level officials acted as the intermediaries in various government-supported programs, the changes in the networks with this group of actors facilitated people's access to a wide range of government support and thus, their economic security and development. The degradation of people's networks with relatives, neighbors and friends, as touched on in previous sections, indicates the negative impacts of the 'explicit' poverty targeting mechanism. This again suggests the importance of an appropriate poverty targeting scheme to promote empowerment through the CDD approach.

In a nutshell, through the implementation of the Chiase program, both political representation and social networks of the people have been significantly improved. This change has resulted in more relevant and inclusive community decision-making and improved people's access to information and government support, leading to increased 'political capabilities' for the poor. This process also reflects a significant change in the 'uppers-lowers' relationship between the political patrons and people, which is a key aspect of transformation as put forward by Chambers (1995: 33). This is a considerable success of the new generation of CDD programs, of which the Chiase program is a representative, as compared to the Social Fund – an older model of the CDD approach - which was found to be failing to challenge existing local institutions and social relations (Babajanian, 2005:

457; Rao and Ibanez, 2003: 33; World Bank OED, 2002: 43).

8.5. Implications for the Implementation of the CDD Approach in Vietnam

The discussions of the meaning of empowerment, effectiveness of the Chiase program in transforming local power relations, and factors affecting empowerment (see Chapter Seven) highlight the importance of a number of factors toward empowerment in this program. Based on these findings, a number of implications for the implementation of the CDD approach in the socio-political context of Vietnam can be drawn. Key factors to be considered include: design of poverty targeting mechanisms, the accountability mechanisms imposed on the local government, strength of local organizations, and provision of material support and capacity-building activities.

Poverty targeting is important for poverty reduction and is an underlying process in the CDD approach. The design of a poverty targeting mechanism can significantly impact on people's access to program material benefits as well as their motivation for participation and social networks. An inappropriate poverty targeting mechanism can, to a considerable extent, impede the empowerment of the poor people as shown in the case of the Chiase program. Further, while poverty reduction is a central goal of the CDD programs, the perception of poverty of a program authority is often different from that of the local people, and therefore, conflict between the downward accountability of the public body and its accountability to program goal and the principals is likely in the CDD programs. Thus, an appropriate poverty targeting mechanism is required to minimize this conflict between lines of accountability of the public body as well as to develop people's participation and community cohesion. An appropriate poverty targeting scheme must be one which is able to deliver material resources to the poorest without causing much discontent among other groups of local people. Based on related literature and empirical findings, this study proposes that while the design of targeting schemes should vary depending on institutional

characteristics of CDD programs, an appropriate targeting scheme must rely on two key characteristics: local community is involved in selecting beneficiaries, and a clearly-defined system of eligibility is applied for beneficiary selection.

While the CDD approach is specified by the CPRGS of Vietnamese government as the key mechanism for poverty reduction at local level in Vietnam, the local institutions in the country have not been well prepared to fit with this development approach. As discussed in 4.4.2, the effectiveness of all existing accountability mechanisms imposed on the commune-level government - monitoring by people's councils, monitoring by local organizations, monitoring by individual, and public reporting in the Village Meetings - appears to be limited. Therefore, while incorporating the commune-level government as a key facilitating agent in the CDD programs provides a great scope for scaling up development achievements, the weaknesses of the accountability mechanisms enforcing this group of actors can, to a considerable extent, hamper the impacts of this development approach. The causal relationship between downward accountability of the commune-level government and the empowerment effects of the CDD program established in this study indicates that improving the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms imposed on the commune-level government is essential for the success of the CDD approach in Vietnam, whose institutional arrangement relies on the partnership between local communities and local government.

To ensure the accountability of the local government in decentralization, a number of useful accountability mechanisms have been proposed by Blair (2000: 31) and Agrawal and Ribot (1999: 479) as shown in 7.4.1. It is also suggested that the combination of these mechanisms would promise a sustainable accountability. Drawing from the experience of the implementation of Democratic Local Governance approach in other developing

countries, realistic measure to improve downward accountability of the commune-level government in Vietnam can be the combination of existing mechanisms with direct election of local government, and the monitoring by the media and civil society.

Direct election of the chairman of Commune People's Committee would give the local people an effective sanctioning power and make the local government more responsive to the needs and demands of the constituents. In addition, to redress the weaknesses of election (as discussed in 4.5.4), monitoring by the media and civil society should be facilitated. Presently, the right to monitor the local government of the media and civil society has been institutionalized in the Constitution and the Grassroots Democratization legislations. What is lacking is an effective framework for the involvement of the civil society in the local governance and a policy environment which encourages the formation and operation of civil society. If this issue is addressed properly, the downward accountability of local government in the country is likely to be ensured.

The fact that the extent of participation in local organizations is a significant factor of people's empowerment indicates the importance of existing local organizations toward empowerment in the CDD approach. This means that the CDD is more likely to be successful in areas with strong local organizations and vice versa. This suggests that decision-makers and planners should be more cautious about the use of the CDD approach in Vietnam context. In mountainous areas and ethnic minority communities, where local organizations are weak, empowerment impact of the CDD programs may be, to a considerable extent, limited. Therefore, the CDD programs implemented in areas without a network of strong local organizations should emphasize on institution building and collective activities as key strategies for people's empowerment. On one hand, the local groups would increase people's 'voice' on issues affecting their lives. On the other hand,

group interactions would build up the sense of cohesion among local people. These assets provide a sustainable basis for people's empowerment as well as poverty reduction.

The correlation between people's access to material benefits as well as training and their empowerment suggests the importance of access to assets and capabilities at individual level in empowering the poor. This again emphasizes the importance of an effective poverty targeting mechanism and effective capacity building activities toward the empowerment of the poor in the CDD approach. To promote empowerment of the poor, the CDD programs should focus on not only structural changes but also the improvements in asset bases, productive skills and social awareness of the target groups.

In conclusion, the thesis has presented three groups of findings. First, empowerment in the Chiase took many forms with different characteristics and consequences, which were all valued by the local people. It was also found that the elite tended to experience empowerment through gaining political power, the ability to influence the distribution of community resources, while the empowerment of the non-elite was mostly characterized by the increase in personal power, such as an improved awareness, confidence and basic skills. There were changes in power relations between local political patrons and the people, and between women and men, while the relationships between the economic better-offs and the poor remained unchanged. The effects of collective processes in the Chiase program on empowerment were limited. Second, the Chiase program did transform the local power relations through improving people's participation in local decision-making and their networks with commune-level officials. The consequence of this transformation was the increased relevance of community decision-making and improved people's access to available resources and support provided by the government. The transformative effect, however, was impeded by inappropriate poverty targeting schemes. Finally, downward

accountability of the commune-echelon government, the extent one participated in local organizations and the amount of material support and training one received from the program were the factors that significantly affected people's empowerment.

The findings suggest that empowerment of the poor should be undestood as a processes involving both the improvements of access to assets and capabilities at individual level and capacity to act at a higher level of decision-making. The CDD approach has a great potential to empower the poor, however, while changing the 'uppers-lowers' relationships between the local political patrons and the people, and women-men relationships are possible in this approach, reversing power relations between the elite and non-elite may be unrealistic. Key factors to be considered in the implementation of the CDD approach in Viet Nam include: the design of poverty targeting mechanisms, the downward accountability of the local government, the strength of local organizations, and the provision of material benefits and training. Careful attention to these factors would ensure more effective implementation of the CDD approach in Vietnam context, contributing to a considerable improvement in the empowerment of the poor, an important aspect of poverty reduction.

References

Abraham, A. & Platteau, J-P., 2000. *The Dilemma of Participation with Endogenous Community Imperfections*. Namur, Department of Economics and CRED (Centre de Recherche en Economie du Développement), University of Namur.

Ackerman, J. M., 2005. *Social Accountability in the Public Sector: A Conceptual Discussion*. Washington D.C, World Bank.

Adams, A. M. *et al.*, 1997. Socioeconomic Stratification by Wealth Ranking: Is It Valid? *World Development*, 25(7): 1165-1172.

Agrawal, A. & Ribot, J., 1999. Accountability in Decentralization: A Framework with South Asian and West African Cases. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 33(4): 473-502.

Alderman, H., 2002. Do Local Officials Know something We don't? Decentralization of Targeted Transfer in Albania. *Journal of Public Economics*, 83(3): 375-404.

Alsop, R. *et al.*, 2005. *Empowerment in Practice*. Washington D.C, World Bank.

Arnstein, S. R., 1969. A ladder of citizen participation. *American Institute of Planners*, 35(216-224).

Babajanian, B. V., 2005. Bottom-up and Top-down? Community Development in post-Soviet Armenia: The Social Fund Model. *Social Policy and Administration*, 39(4): 448-462.

Bachrach, P. & Barantz, M.S., 1970. *Power and Poverty: Theories and Practice*. London, Oxford University Press.

Beard, V. A., 2005. Individual Determinants of Participation in Community Development in Indonesia. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 23: 21-39.

Behn, R. D., 2001. *Rethinking Democratic Accountability*. Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press.

Bergeron, G. *et al.*, 1998. How Reliable Are Group Informant Rating? A Test of Food Security Rating in Honduras. *World Development,* 26(10): 1893-1902.

Beutz, M., 2003. Functional Democracy: Responding to Failures of Accountability. *Harvard International Law Journal*, 44(2): 387-431.

Bhaduri, A., 1982. Agricultural Cooperatives and Peasant Participation in The Socialist Republic of Vietnam. In Bhaduri, A. & Rahman, A. (Eds.), *Studies in Rural Participation*. Geneva, ILO.

Blair, H., 2000. Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries. *World Development*, 28(1): 21-39.

Botes, L. & Van Rensburg, D., 2000. Community Participation in Development: Nine plagues and twelve commandments. *Community Development Journal, 35(1): 41-58.*

Chambers, R., 1995. Paradigm Shift and the Practice of Participatory Research and Development. In Nelson, N. & Wright, S. (Eds.), *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*. London, ITDG.

Chan, A., Madsen, R. & Unger, J., 1992. *Chen Village under Mao and Deng*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Chase, R. & Woolcock, M., 2005. *Social Capital and the Micro-Institutional Foundations of CDD Approaches in East Asia: Evidence, Theory, and Policy Implications*. New Frontiers of Social Policy: Development in a Globalizing World, Arusha Conference.

Cheater, A., 1999. Power in the Postmodern Era. In Cheater, A. (Ed.), *The Anthropology of Power*. London, Routledge.

Chebil, S. & Haque, I., 2003. Community Driven Development Program for Poverty Reduction: Experiences, Issues and Lessons. *Scientific Journal of Administrative Development*, 1(1): 112-40.

Chiase Program Document, 2003. Hanoi, Vietnam - Swedish Poverty Alleviation Program.

Chiase Quang Tri Project Document, 2003. Hanoi, Vietnam - Swedish Poverty Alleviation Program.

Conning, J. & Kevene, M., 2002. Community-based Targeting Mechanisms for Social Safety Nets: A Critical Review. *World Development*, 30(3): 375-394.

Cornwall, A. & Gaventa, J., 2001. *From Users and Choosers to Makers and Shapers: Repositioning Participation in Social Policy*. IDS working paper 17. Brighton, Institute of Development Study.

Conway, T., 2004. *Politics and the PRSP Approach: Vietnam Case Study - Working Paper 241*. London, Overseas Development Institute.

Creswell, J. W., 2003. *Research Design (2nd Edition)*. London, Sage.

Dasgupta, A. & Beard, V. A., 2007. Community Driven Development, Collective Action, and Elite Capture in Indonesia. *Development and Change*, 38(2): 229-249.

Day, P. & Klein, R., 1987. *Accountabilities: Five public services*. London, Tavistock.

De Vaus, D., 2001. *Research Design in Social Research*. London, Sage.

Deshmukh-Ranadive, J., 2006. Gender, Power, and Empowerment: An Analysis of Household and Family Dynamics. In Narayan, D. (Ed.), *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*. New Delhi, Oxford.

Dixon, C., 2004. State, Party and Political Change in Vietnam. In McCargo D. (Ed.), *Rethinking Vietnam*. London, Routledge.

Do, Hoai Nam et al.., 2006. *Vietnam Poverty Update Report 2006: Poverty and Poverty Reduction in Vietnam 1993-2004*. Hanoi, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences.

Dongier, P., Van Domelen, J., Ostrom, E., Ryan, A., Wakeman, W., Bebbington, A., Alkire, S., Esmail, T. & Polski, M., 2001. Community-Driven Development. In *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Sourcebook Vol.1*. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Drury, J. & Reicher, S., 1999. The Intergroup Dynamics of Collective Empowerment: Substantiating the Social Identity Model of Crowd Behavior. *Group Processes Intergroup Relations*, 2(4): 381-402.

Dupar, M. & Badenoch, N. , 2002. *Environment, Livelihoods, and Local Institutions: Decentralization in Mainland Southeast Asia*. World Resources Institute.

Fforde, A. & Vylder, S. , 1996. *From Plan to Market*. Oxford, Westview.

Filmer, A. & Pritchett, L., 2001. Estimating wealth effects without expenditure data or tear - An application to educational enrollment in states of India. *Demography* 38(1): 115-132.

Fine, B., 2001. *Social Capital versus Social Theory*. London, Routledge.

Fox, J., 1996. How does Civil Society thicken - The Political Construction of Social Capital in Rural Mexico. *World Development*, 24(6): 1089-1103.

Freire, P., 1973. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York, the Continuum.

Fritzen, S., 2002. *The 'Foundation of Public Administration'? Decentralization and its Discontent in Transitional Vietnam*. Asia Conference on Governance in Asia: Culture, Ethics, Institutional Reform and Political Change, University of Hong Kong.

Fritzen, S., 2003. *The 'Misery' of Implementation: Governance, Institutions and Anti-corruption in Vietnam*. Conference on Governance, Institution and Anti-corruption in Asia, Auckland.

Fritzen, S., 2006. Probing System Limits: Decentralization and Local Political Accountability in Vietnam. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, 28(1): 1-24.

Fung, A. & Wright, E. O., 2001. Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance. *Politics and Society*, 29(5): 5-41.

Galasso, E & Ravallion, M., 2000. *Local Knowledge vs Local Accountability? Decentralized Targeting of an Anti-Poverty Program in Bangladesh.* Working Paper. Washington D.C, World Bank.

Giddens, A, 1979. *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. London, Macmillan.

Giddens, A, 1982. *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*. London, Macmillan.

Giddens, A, 1984. The *Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration.* Cambridge, Polity Press.

Glewwe, P., 1992. Targeting Assistance to the Poor: Efficient Allocation of Transfer when household income is not observed. *The Journal of Development Economics*, 38(297-322).

Glewwe, P., 2004. An Overview of Economic Growth and Household Welfare in Vietnam in 1990s. In Glewwe P. *et al.* (Ed.), *Economic Growth, Poverty, and Household Welfare in Vietnam*. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Goetz, A. M., 2001. *Women Development Workers: Implementing Rural Credit Program in Bangladesh*. New Delhi, Sage.

Goetz, A. M. & Gupta, R. S., 1996. Who takes the Credit? Gender, Power, and Control over Loan Use in Rural Credit Program in Bangladesh. *World Development*, 24(1): 45-63.

Goetz, A. M. & Jenkins, R., 2002. *Voice, Accountability and Human Development: The Emergence of a New Agenda.* Background Paper for Human Development Report 2002. New York, United Nations Development Program.

Government of Vietnam, 1998. *Decree 29/1998/ND-CP.*

Government of Vietnam, 2001. *Decision 143/2001/QD-TTg.*

Government of Vietnam, 2002. *Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy.*

Government of Vietnam, 2005. *Decision 170/2005/QD-TTg.*

Granovetter, M., 1995. T h e Economic Sociology of Firms and Entrepreneurs. In Portes, A. (ed), *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*. New York, Russell Sage Foundation.

Greene, J.C., Caracelli, V.J. & Graham, W.F., 1989. Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-method Evaluation Designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3): 255-274.

Grootaert, C., Narayan, D., Jones, V. N. & Woolcock, M., 2004. *Measuring Social Capital: An Integrated Questionnaire*. Working Paper. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Grosh, M. E., 1994. *Administering Targeted Social Program in Latin America: from Platitudes to Practice*. World Bank Regional and Sectoral Studies. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Ha, Vinh, 1997. *Nong Nghiep Viet Nam trong Buoc Chuyen Sang Kinh Te Thi Truong* [Vietnam Agriculture in the Transition to Market Economy]. Hanoi, Social Sciences Publisher.

Harriss, J., 2001. *Depoliticizing Development: World Bank and Social Capital*. New Delhi, LeftWord Books.

Hayami, Y., 1994. Strategies for the Reform of Land property Relations. In Barker, R. (Ed.), *Agricultural Policy Analysis for Transition to a Market-oriented in Vietnam*. Roma, Food and Agriculture organization.

Hines, A. M., 1993. Linking Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Cross-Cultural Research: Techniques from Cognitive Science. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 21(3): 729-46.

Hoang, Chi Bao, 2007. *Dan Chu va Dan Chu Co So Nong Thon trong Tien Trinh Doi Moi* [Democracy and Grassroots Democracy in Renovation Process]. Hanoi, National Politic Publisher.

Isham, J. & Kahkonen, S., 2002. Institutional Determinants of the Impacts of Community-based Water Services: Evidence from Sri Lanka. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 50(3): 667-691.

Jandhyala, K., 1998. Women, Empowerment, and the State. *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, 59(1): 191-208.

Johnson, C., 2001. Local Democracy, Democratic Decentralization and Rural Development: Theories, Challenges, and Options for Policy. *Development Policy Review*, 19(4): 521-532.

Kabeer, N., 1999. Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30: 435-64.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. , 1995. Rural Society and State Relations. In Kerkvliet, B. J. T. & Porter, D. J. (Eds.), *Vietnam's Rural Transformation*. Colorado, Westview.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T., 1997. Partial Impressions of Society in Vietnam. In Fforde, A. (Ed.), *Doi moi: Ten years after the 1986 Party Congress*. Canberra, Australian National University.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T., 2003. Authorities and the People: An Analysis of State-Society Relations in Vietnam. In Luong, V. H. (Ed.), *Postwar Vietnam*. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T., 2004. Surveying Local Government and Authority in Contemporary Vietnam. In Kerkvliet, B. J. T. & Marr, D. G. (Eds.), *Beyond Hanoi - Local Government in Vietnam.* Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Kilby, P. J., 2006a. *Questioning empowerment: Lessons from Women's Groups in India.* Participatory Development Working Papers No 06/03 September 2006. Canberra, Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development at Australian National University.

Kilby, P. J., 2006b. Accountability for Empowerment: Dilemmas Facing Non-Governmental Organizations. *World Development*, 34(6): 951-963.

King, S., 1997. Poor Relief and English Economic Development Reappraised. *Economic History Review*, 2: 360-368.

Kingsley, G. T., 1996. Perspectives on Devolution. *Journal of American Planning Association*, 62(4): 419-425.

Kleinen J., 1999. *Facing the Future, Reviving the Past: Study of Social Change in a Northern Vietnamese Village*. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Korten, D.C., 1981a. Community Participation: A Management Perspective on Obstacles and Options In Korten, D.C. & Alfonso, F. B. (Eds.), *Bureaucracy and the Poor: Closing the Gap*. Singapore, McGraw Hill.

Korten, D.C., 1981b. Social Development: Putting people first. In Korten, D.C. & Alfonso, F. B. (Eds.), *Bureaucracy and the Poor: Closing the Gap*. Singapore, Mc Graw Hill.

Kozen, V. & Parker, B., 2000. Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research in Development Projects. In Bamberger, M. (Ed.), *Integrated Approaches to Poverty Assessment in India*. Washington D.C, World Bank.

Kroeker, C. J., 1996. The Cooperative Movement in Nicaragua: Empowerment and Accompaniment of Severely Disadvantaged Peasants. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52(1): 123-138.

Lukes, S., 1974. *Power: A radical View*. London, Macmillan.

Luong, Van Hy & Unger J., 1998. Wealth, Power, and Poverty in the Transition to Market Economies: The process of Socio-economic Differentiation in Rural China and Northern Vietnam. *The China Journal*, 40(Special Issue: Transforming Asian Socialism. China and Vietnam compared.): 61-93.

Malhotra, A., Schuler, S. R. & Boender, C., 2002. *Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development*. Background Paper prepared for World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender: New Perspectives.

Malhotra, A. & Schuler, S. R., 2006. Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development. In Narayan, D. (Ed.), *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*. Washington D.C, World Bank.

Manor, J., 1999. *The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralization*. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Mansuri, G. & Rao, V., 2004. Community-based and -driven Development: A Critical Review. *World Bank Research Observer*, 19(1-39).

Mattner, M., 2004. Power to the people? Local governance and politics in Vietnam. *Environment and Urbanization*, 16: 121-27.

Mc Elwee, P. & Ly, Ha Hoa, 2006. *Deepening Democracy: An Increasing Popular Participation in Vietnam*. Hanoi, UNDP Vietnam Policy Dialogue Paper.

Minot, N & Baulch, B, 2002. *Spatial Distribution of Poverty in Vietnam and the Potential for Targeting*. Policy Research Working Paper 2829. Washington D.C, World Bank.

Moore, M. & Putzel, J., 1999. *Politics and Poverty: A Background Paper for the World Development Report 2000/01*. Brighton, Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex (mimeo).

Mosedale, S., 2005. Assessing Women's Empowerment: Toward a Conceptual Framework. *Journal of International Development*, 17: 243-257.

Mosse, D., 2001. 'People's Knowledge', Participation and Patronage: Operations and Representations in Rural Development. In Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (Eds.), *Participation: The New Tyranny*. London, Zed Books.

Mulgan, R. & Uhr, J., 2000. *Accountability and Governance*. Discussion Paper No.71. Canberra, ANU Public Policy Program.

Murthi, R.K., 2001. Introduction. In Murthi, R. K. (Ed.), *Building Women's Capacities: Interventions in Gender Transformation*. New Delhi, Sage.

Narayan, D. et al.., 2000. *Voices of the Poor: Can anyone hear us*? Washington D.C., World Bank.

Narayan, D. & Pritchett, L., 1999. Cents and Sociability: Household Income and Social Capital in Rural Tanzania. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 47(4): 871-97.

National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001. *National Human Development Report 2001*. Hanoi, National Political Publishing House.

Vietnam National Constitution. 1992.

Naved, R. T., 1994. Empowerment of Women. *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, 22(2): 155-178.

Nelson, N. & Wright, S., 1995. *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*. London, ITDG.

Nguyen, Van Suu, 2004. The Politics of Land: Inequality in Land Access and Local Conflicts in the Red River Delta since Decollectivization. In Taylor, P. (Ed.), *Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges for Reform*. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Norlund, I. et al.., 2006. *The Emerging Civil Society: A Initial Assessment of Civil Society in Vietnam*. Hanoi, Vietnam Institute of Development Studies (VIDS) - UNDP Vietnam - SNV Vietnam - CIVICUS Civil Society Index.

Nuijten, M., 1999. *Institutions and Organizing Practices: Conceptual Discussions*. Posted online: http://www.fao.org/sd/rodirect/ROan0020.htm in September 1999. Accessed in June 2008.

Oakley, P. et al.., 1991. *Project with People: The Practice of Participation in Rural Development*. Geneva, International Labor Office.

Ober, J., 1989. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People*. New Jersey, Princeton University Press.

Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2008. Website: http://www.merriam-webster.com/ Accessed June 2008.

Osmani, S. R., 2000. Participatory Governance, People's Empowerment and Poverty Reduction. SEPED Conference Paper Series.

Page, N. & Czuba, C. E., 1999. Empowerment: What is it? *Journal of Extension* (online).

Pilisuk, M. et al.., 1996. Coming together for Action: The challenge of Contemporary Grassroots Community Organizing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52(1): 15-37.

Portes, A., 1998. Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24: 1-24.

Poverty Task Force, 2002. *Eradicating Poverty and Hunger*. Hanoi, Poverty Task Force.

Pretty, J. N., 1995. Participatory Learning for Sustainable Agriculture. *World Development*, 23(8): 1247-1263.

Program Field Manual. 2003. Vietnam-Sweden Poverty Alleviation Program,

Rahman, M. A., 1993. *People's Self Development: Perspectives in Participatory Action Research*. London, Zed Books.

Rao, V. & Ibanez, A.M., 2003. The Social Impact of Social Funds in Jamaica: A Mix-methods Analysis of Participation, Targeting and Collective Action in Community Driven Development. World Bank policy Research Working Paper 2970. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Rao, V. & Walton, M., 2004. Culture and Public Action: An Introduction. In Rao, V. & Walton, M. (Eds.), *Culture and Public Action: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on Development Policy*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Ravallion, M. & Sen, B., 1994. Impacts on Rural Poverty of Land-based Targeting: Further Results for Bangladesh. *World Development*, 22(6): 823-838.

Riger, S., 1993. What's wrong with Empowerment? *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 21(3): 279-292.

Rissel, C., 1994. Empowerment: the Holy Grail of Health Promotion? *Health promotion International*, 9(1): 39-47.

Rowland, J., 1995. Empowerment Examined. *Development in Practice*, 5(2): 101-107.

Sandelowski, M., 2000. Combining Qualitative and Quantitative: Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis Techniques in Mixed-Method Studies. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 23: 246-55.

Schneider, H., 1999. Participatory Governance for Poverty Reduction. *Journal of International Development*, 11: 521-534.

Schulz, A. & Israel, B., 1991. Empowerment and Empowering Processes: A Theory Development Seminar. The University of Michigan, the Program on Conflict Management Alternatives.

Schulz, A. J. et al.., 1995. Empowerment as a Multi-level Construct: Perceived Control at the Individual, Organizational and Community Levels. *Health Education Research*, 10(3): 309-27.

Sen, A., 1999. *Development as Freedom.* New York, Alfred A Knopf.

Sen, G., 1997. *Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty.* Website: http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/Organizations/healthnet/HUpapers/97_07.pdf. Accessed February 2008.

Shanks et. al, 2003. *Community-Driven Development in Vietnam: A review and Discussion Platform.* Hanoi, World Bank - Partnership to Support the Poorest Communes - Ministry of Planning.

Silver, C., 2003. Do the Donors Have It Right? Decentralization and Changing Local Governance in Indonesia. *The Annals of Regional Science*, 37: 421-434.

Smith-Sreen, P., 1995. *Accountability in Development Organizations: Experiences of Women's Organizations in India.* New Delhi, Sage.

Speer, P. W., 2000. Intrapersonal and Interactional Empowerment: Implications for Theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(1): 51-61.

Steffanie, S. & Truong, T. K. Chuyen 2004. Social Mobility, Regional Disparities, and New Trajectories of Development. In Philip, T. (Ed.), *Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges to Reform.* Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Tanaka, S. et al.., 2006. *A Review of Community-Driven Development and Its Application to the Asian Development Bank.* Asian Development Bank.

To, Duy Hop et al.., 2003. *Dinh Huong Phat Trien Lang-Xa Dong Bang Song Hong Ngay Nay* (Orienting the Development of Village-Commune in Red River Delta Nowadays). Hanoi, Social Science Publishers.

Tran, T. Van Anh & Nguyen, Manh Huan, 1995. Changing Rural Institutions and Social Relations. In Kerkvliet B. J. T. & Porter, D. J. (Eds.), *Vietnam's Rural Transformation.* Colorado, Westview.

Tran, Thi Thu Trang, 2004a. From Collectivization to Globalization: Social Differentiation in Muong Ethnic Community in Vietnam. In Philip, T. (Ed.), *Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges to Reform.* Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Tran, Thi Thu Trang, 2004b. Local Politics and Democracy in a Muong Ethnic Community. In Kerkvliet, B. J. T. & Marr, D. G. (Eds.), *Beyond Hanoi - Local Government in Vietnam.* Singapore, ISEAS.

UNDP, 2001. *Vietnam Human Development Report.* Hanoi, United Nations Development Program.

Uphoff, N., 2005. Analytical Issues in Measuring Empowerment at the Community and Local Levels. In Narayan, D. (Ed.), *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*. New Delhi, Oxford.

Uphoff, N. & Wiyayaratna, C. M., 2000. Demonstrated Benefits from Social Capital: The Productivity of Farmer Organizations in Gal Oya, Sri Lanka. *World Development*, 28(11): 1875-1890.

Vasavakul, T., 2006. *Co-Governance and Human Security: Decentralization, Grassroots Democracy and Poverty Alleviation in Vietnam*. Conference on Democracy and Human Security in Southeast Asia, Bangkok.

Vijalakshmi, V., 2002. A Report on the Politics of Inclusion: Adivasi Women in Local Governance in Karnataka. *Gender Technology and Development*, 6: 269-283.

Vo, Tri Thanh & Pham, Hoang Ha, 2004. Vietnam's Recent Economics Reforms and Developments: Achievements, Paradoxes and Challenges. In Taylor, P. (Ed.), *Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges to Reform. Singapore*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Vu, Quoc Ngu, 2004. Social Disparities in Vietnam: The Case of Poverty Reduction and Educational Attainment In Taylor, P. (Ed.), *Social Inequality in Vietnam and the Challenges to Reform*. Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Wassenich, P. & Whiteside, K., 2004. *CDD Impacts Assessment Study: Optimizing Evaluation Design Under Constraints*. Washington D.C., World Bank.

Weber, M., 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. London, William Hodge and Company.

White, C. W., 1996. Depoliticising Development: The Uses and Abuses of Participation *Development in Practice*, 6(1): 6-15.

Whitehead, L. & Gray-Molina, G., 1999. *The Long Term Politics of Pro-Poor Policies*. Background Paper for the 'World Development Report 2000/1: The Responsiveness of Political Systems to Poverty Reduction', Donnington Castle.

Wong, S. & Guggenheim, S., 2005. Community-Driven Development: Decentralization's Accountability Challenge. In World Bank (Ed.), *East Asia Decentralizes*. Washington D.C.

Woolcock, M. & Narayan, D., 2000. Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy. *World Bank Research Observer*, 15(2): 225-49.

Vietnam Poverty Working Group, 1999. *Vietnam Development Report 2000: Attacking Poverty*. Hanoi, Vietnam Poverty Working Group.

World Bank, 1995. *Colombia Local Government Capacity: Beyond Technical Assistance.* Report 14085-CO. Washington, D.C, World Bank.

World Bank, 2001. *World Bank Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty.* Washington D.C, World Bank.

World Bank PREM, 2002. *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook.* Washington D.C, World Bank Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM).

World Bank OED, 2002. *Social Fund: Assessing Effectiveness.* Washington D.C, World Bank Operation Evaluation Department.

Zimmerman, M. A. & Rappaport, J., 1988. Citizen Participation, Perceived Control, and Psychological Empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 16: 725-750.

Zimmerman, M.A. & Zahniser, J.H., 1991. Refinements of Sphere-specific Measures of Perceived Control: Development of a Socio-political Control Scale. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 19: 189-204.

Appendix 1: Data Concerning Responses of Empowerment

Notes:

1- Empowerment:

E_1: Influence household issues

E_2: Handle household issues independently and effectively

E_3: Influence community decisions

E_4: Query the commune-level officials

E_5: Influence the performance of community works

2- Wealth Group:

1: 'Poor' group

2: 'Middle' group

3: 'Elite' group

3- Education Attainment: Number of years schooling.

Village	Respondent code	Gender	Age	Education Attainment	Wealth Group	Empowerment				
						E_1	E_2	E_3	E_4	E_5
Viet_Trung	1	M	40	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	2	M	43	9	3	0	0	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	3	M	40	10	1	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	4	M	68	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	5	M	42	5	2	0	0	1	1	0
Viet_Trung	6	M	40	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	7	M	46	5	3	0	0	1	0	0
Viet_Trung	8	M	41	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	9	M	35	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	10	M	35	12	3	0	0	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	11	M	62	5	1	0	1	1	0	0
Viet_Trung	12	M	62	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	13	M	45	12	3	0	0	1	0	0
Viet_Trung	14	M	41	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	15	M	34	10	2	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	16	F	50	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	17	F	58	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Viet_Trung	18	F	48	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	19	F	53	5	1	1	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	20	F	45	7	2	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	21	F	30	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	22	F	42	8	1	0	0	1	0	0
Viet_Trung	23	F	38	9	2	1	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	24	F	39	10	2	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	25	F	36	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	26	F	42	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	27	F	32	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	28	F	36	10	3	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Trung	29	F	36	9	1	0	1	0	1	0
Viet_Trung	30	F	34	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	31	M	46	7	3	0	0	1	1	1
Viet_Loc	32	M	43	6	2	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	33	M	35	6	2	0	0	1	0	0
Viet_Loc	34	M	38	9	3	0	0	0	0	0

Viet_Loc	35	M	54	5	1	0	1	0	1	0
Viet_Loc	36	M	35	9	1	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	37	M	53	7	2	0	0	1	0	1
Viet_Loc	38	M	65	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	39	M	48	9	3	0	0	0	1	0
Viet_Loc	40	M	49	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	41	M	45	5	1	0	1	1	0	0
Viet_Loc	42	M	38	12	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	43	M	47	9	1	0	1	1	0	0
Viet_Loc	44	M	61	9	3	0	0	1	0	0
Viet_Loc	45	M	32	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	46	F	52	6	2	0	0	1	1	1
Viet_Loc	47	F	31	7	1	1	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	48	F	25	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	49	F	57	9	3	1	0	1	0	0
Viet_Loc	50	F	49	9	1	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	51	F	39	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	52	F	43	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	53	F	29	11	1	0	1	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	54	F	41	7	1	1	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	55	F	38	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	56	F	47	9	1	1	0	1	0	0
Viet_Loc	57	F	35	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	58	F	37	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	59	F	38	8	2	0	0	0	0	0
Viet_Loc	60	F	44	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	61	M	50	7	2	0	1	0	0	0
An_Son	62	M	43	9	3	0	0	1	1	1
An_Son	63	M	66	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	64	M	53	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	65	M	65	10	3	0	0	1	0	1
An_Son	66	M	38	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	67	M	43	6	3	0	0	1	0	0
An_Son	68	M	66	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	69	M	47	9	1	0	1	0	0	0
An_Son	70	M	58	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	71	M	40	9	3	0	1	0	1	0
An_Son	72	M	27	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
An_Son	73	F	53	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	74	F	40	8	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	75	F	27	10	1	0	1	0	0	0
An_Son	76	F	40	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	77	F	44	7	2	0	1	1	1	0
An_Son	78	F	37	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
An_Son	79	F	43	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	80	F	43	6	1	1	0	1	0	0
An_Son	81	F	28	9	3	0	1	1	1	0
An_Son	82	F	51	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	83	F	38	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Son	84	F	35	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
An_Van	85	F	38	7	2	1	1	0	0	0

An_Van	86	F	51	5	1	0	1	1	0	0
An_Van	87	F	45	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	88	F	49	5	1	1	0	1	0	0
An_Van	89	F	51	7	2	1	1	0	0	0
An_Van	90	F	44	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	91	F	48	7	1	0	0	0	1	0
An_Van	92	F	43	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	93	F	43	6	1	1	1	0	0	0
An_Van	94	F	49	2	1	1	1	0	1	0
An_Van	95	F	46	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	96	F	42	10	3	0	0	1	1	1
An_Van	97	F	21	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	98	F	25	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	99	F	46	9	3	1	0	1	0	0
An_Van	100	M	45	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	101	M	38	9	1	0	1	1	0	1
An_Van	102	M	29	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	103	M	60	6	3	0	0	1	0	1
An_Van	104	M	35	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
An_Van	105	M	49	9	3	0	1	0	0	0
An_Van	106	M	54	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	107	M	58	5	2	0	1	0	0	0
An_Van	108	M	36	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	109	M	37	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	110	M	39	8	3	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	111	M	48	9	3	0	0	1	1	0
An_Van	112	M	54	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
An_Van	113	M	46	8	2	0	0	1	1	1
An_Van	114	M	32	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	115	M	35	3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	116	M	41	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	117	M	53	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	118	M	56	8	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	119	M	49	7	3	0	0	1	0	1
Binh_lich	120	M	62	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	121	M	36	10	2	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	122	M	37	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	123	M	40	10	3	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	124	M	31	12	2	0	0	0	1	0
Binh_lich	125	M	47	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	126	M	63	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	127	F	46	9	1	1	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	128	F	44	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	129	F	52	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	130	F	44	9	2	1	0	1	1	0
Binh_lich	131	F	38	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	132	F	43	10	2	1	0	1	0	0
Binh_lich	133	F	56	11	3	1	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	134	F	62	7	2	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	135	F	32	10	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	136	F	44	7	2	0	0	0	0	0

Binh_lich	137	F	36	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_lich	138	F	35	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	139	M	35	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	140	M	64	7	3	0	0	1	0	1
Binh_Kim	141	M	47	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	142	M	46	9	2	0	0	0	1	1
Binh_Kim	143	M	66	8	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	144	M	63	9	3	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	145	M	28	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	146	M	31	8	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	147	M	69	6	2	0	0	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	148	M	39	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	149	M	38	12	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	150	F	35	9	2	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	151	F	42	7	1	0	1	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	152	F	30	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	153	F	35	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	154	F	36	6	1	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	155	F	45	10	1	0	1	0	1	0
Binh_Kim	156	F	27	9	1	1	1	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	157	F	47	9	1	1	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	158	F	45	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	159	F	55	10	2	1	0	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	160	F	55	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	161	M	62	9	3	0	0	1	1	1
Son_Dong	162	M	43	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	163	M	37	10	1	0	1	0	1	0
Son_Dong	164	M	34	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	165	M	56	9	3	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	166	M	55	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	167	M	30	12	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	168	M	44	3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Dong	169	M	35	7	2	0	1	1	0	0
Son_Dong	170	M	29	9	3	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	171	M	65	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Dong	172	M	42	9	3	0	0	1	1	0
Son_Dong	173	M	35	12	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	174	M	55	5	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Dong	175	M	38	7	2	0	0	1	0	0
Son_Dong	176	F	47	6	1	1	0	1	1	0
Son_Dong	177	F	41	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	178	F	35	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	179	F	52	10	3	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	180	F	31	7	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Dong	181	F	31	9	2	1	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	182	F	57	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	183	F	49	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	184	F	39	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	185	F	43	8	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Dong	186	F	32	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	187	F	41	12	2	1	0	0	0	0

Son_Dong	188	F	29	7	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Dong	189	F	45	6	3	1	1	0	0	0
Son_Dong	190	F	38	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	191	M	48	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	192	M	31	12	1	0	1	0	1	0
Son_Khe	193	M	52	8	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	194	M	38	6	2	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Khe	195	M	37	9	3	0	0	0	0	1
Son_Khe	196	M	35	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	197	M	36	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Son_Khe	198	M	50	10	2	0	0	1	0	0
Son_Khe	199	M	42	6	3	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	200	M	37	9	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Khe	201	M	29	5	2	0	0	1	1	1
Son_Khe	202	M	38	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	203	M	54	5	3	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	204	F	29	7	1	1	1	0	0	0
Son_Khe	205	F	45	7	1	0	1	0	0	0
Son_Khe	206	F	38	7	2	1	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	207	F	42	7	3	0	0	1	1	0
Son_Khe	208	F	47	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	209	F	47	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	210	F	35	7	1	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	211	F	37	5	2	1	1	1	0	0
Son_Khe	212	F	38	7	3	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	213	F	44	9	2	1	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	214	F	65	9	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	215	F	32	10	2	0	0	0	0	0
Son_Khe	216	F	35	6	1	0	1	0	0	0

Appendix 2: Data Concerning Factors Affecting Empowerment

Village	Respondent code	Education Attainment	Wealth Level	Amount of Benefits	Training	Participation in Local Organization	Downward Accountability
Viet_Trung	1	5	3	1	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	2	9	5	0	2	2	1
Viet_Trung	3	10	2	1	2	1	1
Viet_Trung	4	7	6	0	0	0	1
Viet_Trung	5	5	6	0	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	6	5	2	2	2	0	1
Viet_Trung	7	5	7	0	1	2	1
Viet_Trung	8	7	7	0	2	1	1
Viet_Trung	9	9	5	0	0	1	1
Viet_Trung	10	12	6	1	2	4	1
Viet_Trung	11	5	2	2	3	2	1
Viet_Trung	12	7	1	2	0	1	1
Viet_Trung	13	12	8	1	2	1	1
Viet_Trung	14	5	7	0	2	1	1
Viet_Trung	15	10	5	1	3	2	1
Viet_Trung	16	9	5	1	1	0	1
Viet_Trung	17	0	3	1	2	1	1
Viet_Trung	18	3	5	0	0	1	1
Viet_Trung	19	5	0	3	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	20	7	4	1	1	0	1
Viet_Trung	21	6	3	1	1	0	1
Viet_Trung	22	8	2	2	2	1	1
Viet_Trung	23	9	5	0	0	1	1
Viet_Trung	24	10	4	1	2	0	1
Viet_Trung	25	4	4	1	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	26	5	7	0	0	2	1
Viet_Trung	27	5	5	0	1	0	1
Viet_Trung	28	10	5	0	1	1	1
Viet_Trung	29	9	3	1	1	0	1
Viet_Trung	30	6	3	2	2	2	1
Viet_Loc	31	7	8	0	2	5	1
Viet_Loc	32	6	4	1	2	1	1
Viet_Loc	33	6	5	0	1	2	1
Viet_Loc	34	9	9	0	0	1	1
Viet_Loc	35	5	2	2	2	0	1
Viet_Loc	36	9	4	2	2	2	1
Viet_Loc	37	7	5	0	0	1	1
Viet_Loc	38	4	3	1	1	2	1
Viet_Loc	39	9	6	0	1	1	1
Viet_Loc	40	6	7	0	0	1	1
Viet_Loc	41	5	3	2	2	1	1
Viet_Loc	42	12	6	0	0	1	1
Viet_Loc	43	9	2	2	1	2	1
Viet_Loc	44	9	5	0	2	2	1
Viet_Loc	45	9	3	1	0	1	1

Viet_Loc	46	6	5	0	2	0	1
Viet_Loc	47	7	4	1	1	1	1
Viet_Loc	48	7	6	1	2	0	1
Viet_Loc	49	9	5	0	2	2	1
Viet_Loc	50	9	3	1	1	2	1
Viet_Loc	51	6	5	1	0	0	1
Viet_Loc	52	5	3	2	1	1	1
Viet_Loc	53	11	6	2	0	2	1
Viet_Loc	54	7	3	1	1	1	1
Viet_Loc	55	6	5	0	0	1	1
Viet_Loc	56	9	3	2	2	1	1
Viet_Loc	57	5	3	1	2	1	1
Viet_Loc	58	4	6	1	2	2	1
Viet_Loc	59	8	5	0	1	0	1
Viet_Loc	60	9	7	0	0	1	1
An_Son	61	7	3	1	3	1	1
An_Son	62	9	9	1	1	3	1
An_Son	63	5	5	0	2	1	1
An_Son	64	7	1	3	2	0	1
An_Son	65	10	5	0	0	2	1
An_Son	66	7	4	0	1	1	1
An_Son	67	6	7	0	1	1	1
An_Son	68	4	5	0	1	1	1
An_Son	69	9	1	3	2	2	1
An_Son	70	9	6	0	3	0	1
An_Son	71	9	7	1	0	1	1
An_Son	72	5	4	2	1	1	1
An_Son	73	3	3	1	2	0	1
An_Son	74	8	3	1	1	2	1
An_Son	75	10	3	1	2	1	1
An_Son	76	9	5	0	0	1	1
An_Son	77	7	4	1	2	1	1
An_Son	78	5	2	2	1	1	1
An_Son	79	9	5	0	1	2	1
An_Son	80	6	2	2	0	1	1
An_Son	81	9	4	1	2	1	1
An_Son	82	7	6	0	0	1	1
An_Son	83	9	4	1	2	1	1
An_Son	84	5	3	2	1	0	1
An_Van	85	7	5	0	2	1	1
An_Van	86	5	1	3	1	1	1
An_Van	87	6	6	1	0	1	1
An_Van	88	5	4	1	2	2	1
An_Van	89	7	7	0	3	1	1
An_Van	90	2	4	1	2	1	1
An_Van	91	7	0	4	1	1	1
An_Van	92	0	4	1	1	0	1
An_Van	93	6	2	1	4	1	1
An_Van	94	2	1	3	2	2	1
An_Van	95	6	2	1	0	1	1
An_Van	96	10	8	1	3	1	1

An_Van	97	7	5	0	2	1	1
An_Van	98	5	5	0	0	0	1
An_Van	99	9	5	1	1	1	1
An_Van	100	7	5	1	1	1	1
An_Van	101	9	1	3	1	2	1
An_Van	102	9	5	0	1	1	1
An_Van	103	6	5	0	2	4	1
An_Van	104	5	3	2	0	0	1
An_Van	105	9	5	1	1	1	1
An_Van	106	7	6	0	1	0	1
An_Van	107	5	4	1	3	2	1
An_Van	108	9	4	0	0	0	1
An_Van	109	7	5	0	1	1	1
An_Van	110	8	5	0	0	1	1
An_Van	111	9	8	0	2	2	1
An_Van	112	9	5	0	1	0	1
An_Van	113	8	5	0	0	1	1
An_Van	114	9	5	0	1	1	1
Binh_lich	115	3	2	2	1	1	0
Binh_lich	116	6	4	1	1	0	0
Binh_lich	117	7	3	2	2	1	0
Binh_lich	118	8	4	1	1	1	0
Binh_lich	119	7	6	0	1	1	0
Binh_lich	120	4	4	0	0	1	0
Binh_lich	121	10	5	1	2	1	0
Binh_lich	122	5	4	0	2	1	0
Binh_lich	123	10	9	0	2	1	0
Binh_lich	124	12	3	0	0	1	0
Binh_lich	125	4	2	2	1	0	0
Binh_lich	126	3	5	0	0	1	0
Binh_lich	127	9	4	2	2	1	0
Binh_lich	128	5	3	1	0	0	0
Binh_lich	129	9	5	0	2	2	0
Binh_lich	130	9	4	1	1	1	0
Binh_lich	131	5	4	2	0	0	0
Binh_lich	132	10	6	0	3	2	0
Binh_lich	133	11	5	0	0	1	0
Binh_lich	134	7	4	1	1	1	0
Binh_lich	135	10	7	0	1	0	0
Binh_lich	136	7	5	1	2	1	0
Binh_lich	137	7	2	2	1	1	0
Binh_lich	138	9	3	0	1	2	0
Binh_Kim	139	7	6	1	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	140	7	6	0	2	3	0
Binh_Kim	141	9	5	0	0	1	0
Binh_Kim	142	9	6	1	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	143	8	3	1	2	1	0
Binh_Kim	144	9	8	1	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	145	7	5	0	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	146	8	3	1	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	147	6	4	1	1	0	0

Binh_Kim	148	5	5	0	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	149	12	5	0	2	2	0
Binh_Kim	150	9	6	1	0	1	0
Binh_Kim	151	7	3	1	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	152	7	5	0	1	0	0
Binh_Kim	153	9	3	1	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	154	6	4	1	2	1	0
Binh_Kim	155	10	1	3	2	2	0
Binh_Kim	156	9	3	2	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	157	9	3	2	0	0	0
Binh_Kim	158	5	7	0	1	1	0
Binh_Kim	159	10	5	1	0	1	0
Binh_Kim	160	5	6	0	2	0	0
Son_Dong	161	9	6	1	2	4	0
Son_Dong	162	5	5	1	0	1	0
Son_Dong	163	10	3	1	1	1	0
Son_Dong	164	5	6	1	3	0	0
Son_Dong	165	9	6	1	0	1	0
Son_Dong	166	5	7	0	1	1	0
Son_Dong	167	12	4	1	2	0	0
Son_Dong	168	3	2	1	2	1	0
Son_Dong	169	7	5	0	1	1	0
Son_Dong	170	9	5	0	2	0	0
Son_Dong	171	4	3	1	1	1	0
Son_Dong	172	9	6	1	2	2	0
Son_Dong	173	12	5	0	2	2	0
Son_Dong	174	5	3	2	1	0	0
Son_Dong	175	7	5	0	1	1	0
Son_Dong	176	6	3	1	1	1	0
Son_Dong	177	7	7	1	1	2	0
Son_Dong	178	9	5	2	2	2	0
Son_Dong	179	10	5	1	2	0	0
Son_Dong	180	7	2	2	1	1	0
Son_Dong	181	9	7	0	3	2	0
Son_Dong	182	9	3	1	0	1	0
Son_Dong	183	9	5	0	1	2	0
Son_Dong	184	6	4	1	1	1	0
Son_Dong	185	8	5	2	2	1	0
Son_Dong	186	9	2	2	0	3	0
Son_Dong	187	12	5	0	2	0	0
Son_Dong	188	7	5	0	2	1	0
Son_Dong	189	6	8	1	2	1	0
Son_Dong	190	9	5	0	0	1	0
Son_Khe	191	6	4	1	0	1	0
Son_Khe	192	12	2	1	2	1	0
Son_Khe	193	8	3	1	1	1	0
Son_Khe	194	6	6	0	1	1	0
Son_Khe	195	9	7	1	2	3	0
Son_Khe	196	4	5	1	2	0	0
Son_Khe	197	0	2	2	0	1	0
Son_Khe	198	10	5	1	3	1	0

Son_Khe	199	6	9	0	1	0	0
Son_Khe	200	9	1	2	0	2	0
Son_Khe	201	5	4	1	2	2	0
Son_Khe	202	9	5	0	1	1	0
Son_Khe	203	5	4	1	0	1	0
Son_Khe	204	7	5	2	4	2	0
Son_Khe	205	7	4	1	1	1	0
Son_Khe	206	7	6	1	1	1	0
Son_Khe	207	7	4	0	0	2	0
Son_Khe	208	7	3	1	1	3	0
Son_Khe	209	5	5	0	2	0	0
Son_Khe	210	7	0	2	1	1	0
Son_Khe	211	5	5	0	1	2	0
Son_Khe	212	7	7	1	1	1	0
Son_Khe	213	9	6	0	1	1	0
Son_Khe	214	9	3	1	2	2	0
Son_Khe	215	10	5	1	0	0	0
Son_Khe	216	6	2	1	1	1	0

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Australian National University
School of Anthropology & Archaeology
------***-----

Questionnaire

"Empowerment through the Community Driven Development Programs

- A case study of Chiase Program"

Research:	PhD Research
Principal Investigator:	Truong Chi Trung
Research Site:	Quang Tri province

Questionnaire Identity:

Questionnaire number:
Interviewer:
Date of interview:

I. Ethnographic Information of the respondent:

1.1. Name in full (optional):_____

1.2. Age: _____

1.3. Gender: _____

1.4. Religion: _____

1.5. Education: _____

1.6. Primary occupation: _____

1.7. Secondary occupation: _____

1.8. Family size: _____

II. Socio-Economic Information

2.1. Could you please roughly specify the grade of your house?

[ ] Temporary house

[ ] Brick house with low-quality furniture

[ ] Brick house with standard furniture

[ ] Brick house with concrete roof

2.2. Do you have access to following facilities?

Type of facility	Access	Description
Clean water		
Electricity		
Hygienic Toilet		

2.3. How much land do you possess?

Type of Land	Area (sao)	Description
Garden		
Paddy field		
Water Pond		
Planting Forest		
Rubber tree		
Coffee tree		

2.4. Is your household currently classified as poor?

[ ] Yes [ ] No

2.5. Which assets do you have? Please describe the quality and quantity.

No	Assets	Quantity	Quality
1	Telephone		
2	Mobile		
3	TV		
4	Bicycle		
5	Motorcycle		
6	Buffalo		
7	Cow		
8	Sow		
9	Pig		
10	Agriculture machine		
11	Shop (tailoring, carpentry, small business, repair)		
12	Other		

2.6. Do you take membership of the following organizations? What is your position?

Name of the organization	Member	Executive member	Note
1	2	3	4
Communist Party			
Veterans' Association			
Farmers' Association			
Women's Union			
Seniors' Association			
Learning Promotion Association			
Youth Union			
Red Cross Society			
Buddhist Group			
Funeral Group			
Other (specify):			

III. Poverty Targeting

3.1. In your opinion, which of following statement about poor household is most accurate?

[ ] All poor households are deserving.

[ ] Some 'poor' households are not deserving.

[ ] Many 'poor' households are not deserving.

3.2. To what extent are the village activities relevant to the local problems?

[ ] All activities are relevant

[ ] Some activities are irrelevant

[ ] Many activities are irrelevant

[ ] Majority of activities is irrelevant

3.3. In your opinion, how should the program support be used?

[ ] Accessible to all villagers

[ ] Accessible to all villagers but priority is given to the poor

[ ] Accessible to the poor only

* Explain the reason:

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

IV. Change in Participation in Local Governance

4.1. How often did you attend the village meetings in the initial period of the Chiase?

[ ] Always [ ] Often

[ ] Occasionally [ ] Never

4.2. How regularly did you attend the village meetings last year?

[ ] Always [ ] Often

[ ] Occasionally [ ] Never

4.3. How often did you take the floor in the village meetings?

[ ] Often [ ] Sometimes [ ] Rarely [ ] Never

Please give examples of issues you raised: . . . . . .

. . . . . .

* If the respondent rarely or never took the floor: go to question Q4.4. Otherwise, go to question 4.5.

4.4. Please explain the main obstacles obstructing your participation in village meetings

. . . . . .

4.5. Why did you participate in village meetings?

. . . . . .

4.6. In your opinion, to what extent are the village activities relevant to local problems and needs?

[ ] All activities are relevant

[ ] Some activities are irrelevant

[ ] Many activities are relevant

4.7. To what extent, are you satisfied with the performance of the village leaders?

[ ] Very satisfied

[ ] Somewhat satisfied

[ ] Less satisfied

[ ] Not satisfied

V. Change in People's Networks

5.1. What are the important sources of support that your household well-being has relied on? Please rank their importance and identify the providers or intermediaries of this support.

Source of support	Providers or Intermediaries
1	
2.	
3	
4.	

5.2. How have your relationships with the following actors changed in recent years?

Type of networks	Become worse	Unchanged	Become better
External agency officials			
Commune-level			

officials
Local employers & creditors
Relatives and friends
Other (specify)

* Please explain how the changes have occurred? . . . . . .

. . . . . .

5.3. What are the impacts of the changes in the above relationships (if any) on your well-being?

. . . . . .

VI. Empowerment

6.1. Have you received material support from the Chiase program?

[ ] No [ ] Yes

* If yes, how many times have you received material support? :. . . . . .

* Did this support result in significant change in your life?

. . . . . .

6.2. How many training courses have you attended? . . . . . course

* What have you learnt from the training courses?

. . . . . .

. . . . .

6.3. Did you learn new skills or something valuable through participating in activities of Chiase?

[ ] No [ ] Yes

* If yes, what have you learnt?

. . . . . .

6.4. In recent years, did you experience a change in your rights and capability to make decisions on issues which are important to your life? (Do not prompt the respondents with selection; Check against the items matching the answer):

[ ] Influence household decisions (expenditure, investment, education of children)

[ ] Handle household issues more independently and efficiently

[ ] Influence community decisions

[ ] Query the commune-level staff

[ ] Influence the performance of infrastructure work

[ ] Other (specify):

6.5. Could you please explain how the change has been achieved?

. . . . . .

6.6. What are the consequences resulting from this change(s)?

Appendix 4: Checklist for Key Informant Interview

Theme 1: The Chiase program

- Program goals, vision, principles, organizational settings, and operation.
- Accountability relations in the program.

Theme 2: Downward accountability of the CPMU

1- The extent to which the CPMU mobilizes people's participation in planning and implementation of village activities.

Theme 3: Poverty targeting

1- Targeting methods, intermediary agents, and eligibility.

2- Strengths, weaknesses, and attendant problems associated with each targeting mechanism.

Theme 4: People's participation

1- Level of people's participation in village decision-making (scope of issues to be decided through village meetings).

2- Extent of people's participation in village decision-making (attendance, activeness)

3- Improvement in village decision-making through the implementation of the Chiase program.

4- Obstacles to participation.

5- Motives of people's participation.

Theme 5: People's social networks

1- Important sources of support for people's well-being (social networks).

2- Changes in important social networks of people through the Chiase program.

3- Impacts of changes in social networks on people's well-being.

Appendix 5: The CPRGS – Summary of key Contents

The CPRGS focuses on the following main objectives:

1- Promoting rapid and sustainable economic growth while ensuring social progress and equity, with attention to: developing agriculture and rural areas; ensuring food security; creating jobs; greater support to disadvantaged areas; and eliminating regional and ethnic inequities.

2- Creating an equal business environment for all types of enterprises from all economic sectors including enterprises with foreign direct investment (FDI), and encouraging the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

3- Continuing with structural reforms, including: SOE reform; state budget; commercial banking; financial and credit organizations; trade liberalization; bilateral commitments under AFTA, WTO accession; promoting income growth; developing markets to distribute consumer goods, etc.

4- Undertaking public administration reform, including: institutional reform, administrative reform, civil service reform, and public finance reform to increase accountability in civil service and administration, to improve access to public services, and to ensure social equity.

5- Encouraging human development and reducing inequality; priority to quality of and access to health and education services and development; environmental protection, prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission and infection, gender equality and improvement of the life of ethnic groups. Focus on urban poverty - especially regarding employment, income and housing, and ensuring equal access to services.

6- Reducing vulnerability and improving the capacity of vulnerable groups to manage risk better by developing and expanding social protection and safety nets for the poor and introducing a more comprehensive approach to natural disaster

management.

7- Establishing a system of qualitative and quantitative socio-economic development and poverty reduction indicators (with gender and social group elements taken into consideration) to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the CPRGS.

Source: (Tim Conway, 2004)

Appendix 6: Statistical Tests

1- Compare the percentage of respondents being empowered in the Household domain between "elite' and 'non-elite' (Chi-Square Test[1]):

Crosstab

Count

		Elite		Total
		0	1	0
Empo_1	0	103	30	133
	1	76	7	83
Total		179	37	216

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.181(b)	1	.007		
Continuity Correction(a)	6.220	1	.013		
Likelihood Ratio	7.808	1	.005		
Fisher's Exact Test				.009	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.147	1	.008		
N of Valid Cases	216				

a Computed only for a 2x2 table
b 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.22.

*** Interpretation:**

Footnote b in the above table indicates that '0 cell (0%) have expected count less than 5'. This means that the assumption of Chi-square test has not been violated, as all expected cell sizes are greater than 5.

The Continuity Correction value is 6.22 with an associated significance level of 0.013 (less than 0.05). This means that, at 95% confidence level, the difference between the 'elite' and 'non-elite' in terms of empowerment in the household domain is significant. There is an association between the elite status and the likelihood of being empowered.

---

[1] Chi-square test can be used to explore the relationship between two categorical variables. Each of these variables can have two or more categories. This test compares the observed frequencies or proportion of cases that occur in each of the categories, with the values that would be expected if there was no association between the two variables being measured. It is based on a cross-tabulation table, with cases classified according to the categories in each variable (e.g. male/female; smoker/non-smoker).

2- Compare the percentage of respondents being empowered in the Community domain between "elite' and 'non-elite' (Chi-square Test):

Crosstab

Count

		Elite		Total
		0	1	0
Empo_2	0	145	14	159
	1	34	23	57
Total		179	37	216

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.414(b)	1	.000		
Continuity Correction(a)	27.234	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	26.180	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	29.278	1	.000		
N of Valid Cases	216				

a Computed only for a 2x2 table

b 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.76.

*** Interpretation:**

Footnote b in the above table indicates that '0 cell (0%) have expected count less than 5'. This means that the assumption of Chi-square test has not been violated, as all expected cell sizes are greater than 5.

The Continuity Correction value is 27.23 with an associated significance level of 0.00 (less than 0.05). This means that, at 95% confidence level, the difference between the 'elite' and 'non-elite' in terms of empowerment in the community domain is significant. There is an association between the elite status and the likelihood of being empowered.

3- Compare the mean of 'activeness in meeting' variable between "elite' and 'non-elite' (Independent-samples T-test[2]):

Group Statistics

	elite	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Activeness	1	37	1.86	1.004	.165
	0	179	1.13	.782	.058

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
Activeness	Equal variances assumed	4.296	.039	4.914	214	.000	.731	.149
	Equal variances not assumed			4.172	45.43	.000	.731	.175

*** Interpretation:**

The Sig. value of the Levene's test is 0.039, less than 0.05. This means that the variances for the two groups are not the same (Equal variances not assumed).

T-test for Equality of means shows that the Sig. value is 0.00, less than 0.05. This means that at 95% confident level, the mean score of the 'activeness in meetings' variable for the 'elite' is significantly higher than what of the 'non-elite'.

[2] Independent T-test can be used to compare the mean scores of two different groups.

Appendix 7: Executive Summary of Chiase Programme Document

Chia Se

Vietnam - Sweden Poverty Alleviation Programme

Programme Document

Hanoi
10 June 2003

"The commune level is the closest to the people and the foundation for public administration. If the commune level works, all work will smoothly follow."

(President Ho Chi Minh)

"Chia Se" can be translated as "sharing", and the term is often used to express "partnership". In the case of the *Chia Se* programme, the term is used to express the spirit of good governance, and of devolving responsibilities for development to provincial, district and commune level. In the context of decentralisation, the term reflects "sharing of power".

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The new poverty alleviation cooperation initiative between the Government of Vietnam (GoV) and Sida, named by stakeholders "*Chia Se*", builds on the GoV's Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) that was adopted in mid 2002. The programme evolved from previous cooperation programmes between the two governments, especially the Mountain Rural Development Programme (MRDP). However, in line with CPRGS, the programme takes a much broader approach to poverty alleviation. In addition to the CPRGS, the programme rests on two central GoV policies: Grassroots democracy and decentralisation. The programme is also in line with Sida priorities and strategies in Vietnam and its policy of poverty. These include that poverty alleviation is based on the needs of the poor and is defined with their participation, to ensure local ownership and participation, while supporting capacity building, public administration reform, grass-roots democracy, process-orientation, and devolution of responsibility and authority.

The *Chia Se* programme has been planned and developed in close cooperation with the various stakeholders – from village to national level. The progress and outcomes have been discussed and endorsed in meetings of the Joint Reference Group of which key ministries and Sida are members, and to which also provincial representatives were invited. The planning process consisted of several phases: a pre-planning phase that took place between January and April 2002, and the in-depth planning phase that lasted from June till September. The pre-planning phase resulted in the Concept and Framework Paper that was approved in principle at the annual consultations between the two governments of Vietnam and Sweden. The more detailed planning started in June 2002 and resulted in a set of programme and projects documents that were submitted to the partners in September 2002. After that the documents have been translated, reviewed by the stakeholders, and redrafted. A Sida appraisal of the programme proposal took place in January 2003. It has been agreed that the Programme Framework Agreement may include separate funding for other programmes or projects, one such project will be the RIDP project in Tuyen Quang[1]. The planning process has employed various methods all based on active participation of the stakeholders. In total some 1,500 people have been involved in the planning of *Chia Se.*

Programme vision and approach to address identified constraints

The central problem that emerged from discussions with stakeholders at the local level was *'the difficulty for households to access poverty reduction resources'*. Underlying problems related to:

- systems for effective two-way information exchange
- opportunities to access knowledge and skills

- opportunities to access capital and other resources
- effective and appropriate technical and management support

With these constraints as a point of departure a programme vision was formulated. The vision is a demand-driven process in which planning and implementation processes are based on expressed local aspirations and needs, and in which resources for poverty alleviation are available and managed by local communities. The central mechanisms in *Chia Se* are Local Planning and Management for Development (LPMD) and Local Development Funds (LDF). Participation of local communities and people is organised in such a way that it builds on, and strengthens the capacities of local communities to improve their livelihoods in a sustainable manner. In addition, the outcome and benefits of poverty alleviation activities are distributed in an equitable manner among the different stakeholders. The vision highlights that the target for the programme is the poor villages/households and that their demands to achieve improved livelihoods drive the poverty alleviation support activities provided by the public and private sector, including civil society.

The programme approach represents a dynamic, flexible and process oriented environment, where the local communities and poor households are actively involved in the design and management of poverty alleviation activities. The approach builds on the concept of decentralised planning, management and funding of sustainable poverty alleviation.

Programme goal, objectives, outputs and components

The *Chia Se* overall goal is: *A just and fair and sustainable society.* This long-term goal will be accomplished through the fulfilment of the programme's objective or purpose, which is: P*overty Alleviation.* To achieve the programme objective, four outputs have been formulated:

1. *Effective resources delivery* in terms of financial resources, skills, knowledge, techniques, information, etc
2. *Effective structures* for delivering the resources regarding communities, public sector institutions
(such as provincial, district and commune authorities), mass organisations and
NGOs, and private sector.
3. *Effective systems* in terms of planning, financial management, information, legislation, regulations and guidelines and resources mobilisation.
4. *Effective capacity (empowerment)* among households, communities, public institutions and authorities, civil society and private sector.

These outputs will be realized through 3 provincial and 1 national projects. The objective of the provincial projects is summarized as: *Poor households have good access to poverty alleviation resources.*

To reach the provincial objectives, provincial project outputs and activities have been

specified including effective systems and management structures, establishment of LPMD and LDF, and effective policies for poverty alleviation.

To ensure the overall programme outputs and to provide support to the three provincial projects, a national project is implemented with the objective of: *Effective National Support to Poverty Alleviation,* through the outputs of: *effective policies, effective information and effective management of poverty alleviation funds.*

To achieve the outputs the programme has 4 major components:

1. Decentralised Planning system

Chia Se will develop and support efficient and technically sound and participatory planning mechanisms and systems that are fully integrated into the existing GoV's planning systems.

2. Decentralised Management System

Chia Se will support the set up of comprehensive and effective structures and systems for management of development with specified roles and responsibilities of villages, communes, districts and provinces. Support will include planning facilitation, training and technical services.

3. Decentralised Financial System

A key operational mechanism of *Chia Se* is the Local Development Fund (LDF). The Fund channels development funds to district, communes and villages. The LDF will not be restricted to predefined investments but will enable local choices, and provides for meaningful local planning, programming and budgeting, as well as for related capacity building. The LDF will initially be financed by external grants, but it is foreseen that in the future financial sources can encompass national budget appropriations, and provincial, district and commune resource mobilization as well.

. Local Planning and Management for Development

In conjunction with the LDF, the second core mechanism of the *Chia Se* programme is Local Planning and Management for Development (LPMD). These two tools, LPMD and LDF, are the foundation of the programme to achieve decentralisation and local democracy, empowerment of local levels, and delivery of resources for investment and services. The LPMD and LDF build on several years of experience in Vietnam that have been working at reinforcing local development planning and management systems.

Programme principles

To become eligible for inclusion in the *Chia Se* programme, the principles guiding the programme in general, and the LPMD and LDF in particular, have to be accepted and adhered to. The guiding principles, which are listed below are in total conformity with the overall principles of the programme, and in line with Vietnam's policy framework. During the

preparatory discussions stakeholders fully subscribed to these principles.

- Decentralisation and local involvement
- Equality and equity
- Transparency and accountability
- Poverty focus
- Sustainability
- Multi-sector approach

Programme beneficiaries and expected outcomes

The *Chia Se* programme is focusing on the poor villages and the poor households within these villages. These are the primary beneficiaries as they will improve their livelihood and become empowered to make decisions about their own welfare and participate in the development process of the society. These changes will take place trough improved income generation – on and off farm – improvement of production methods, improvement in infrastructure and services, and improvement in knowledge, skills etc. However, the programme has a much wider approach to poverty alleviation, as it will build capacity in the Vietnamese society – public sector, civil society and private sector – for sustainable poverty alleviation. Therefore, there is also a secondary group of beneficiaries – commune, district, provincial and ministerial staff. These will benefit from the *Chia Se* programme, as they will improve their capacity in policy analysis, planning, management and financial matters, as well as in technical matters regarding delivery of services, techniques and knowledge to the primary beneficiaries. Finally, there is a third group of beneficiaries, the actors in the civil society NGOs and private sector, that also will have improved capacity to deliver poverty alleviation programmes and become an active partner in poverty alleviation.

Management structure

In an overall perspective, the *Chia Se* programme structure and organisation will connect to CPRGS structures, thereby ensuring a broad based approach to poverty alleviation. The programme will be governed by a Programme Framework Agreement between the GoV and Sida. Within the framework of the overall agreement, the Government will delegate to the Provincial Peoples' Committee in the concerned provinces the power to sign a Specific Project Agreement with Sida for the respective provincial projects. For the national project MPI will sign a Specific Project Agreement with Sida.

At the National level, A Joint Steering Group will be the "lead-institution" and bring together key ministries (preferable represented by the same persons that are members of the Working Unit of the Steering Committee for CPRGS), other national institutions relevant for *Chia Se* as well as representatives from the provinces in which the programme is implemented. The Group will have strategic responsibility of the programme implementation

and approve all programme reports, be fore submission to respective parties.

The *Chia Se* Secretariat will be located in the CPRGS Secretariat. Its role is to monitor, collate and summarise reports and aggregate accounts from the different provincial and national projects activities. The reports will be discussed and approved in the Joint Steering Group.

For the National Project, the organisation structure consists of several ministerial sub-projects in ministries related to *Chia Se* (MPI; MoLISA; MARD; MoF and GSO). To ensure close cooperation and cross-ministerial exchange of experiences and information a National Project Coordination Group will be established. The Coordination Group will report to the *Chia Se* Joint Steering Group and will be supported by the *Chia Se* Secretariat.

At Provincial level, the provincial projects will be implemented under the supervision of the Provincial People's Committee (PPC). The PPC will form a Steering Committee, chaired by the PPC and consisting of representatives of departments, mass organisations and other stakeholders related to poverty alleviation. The Steering Committee will monitor implementation but will not have immediate management tasks. The PPC will set up a Provincial Secretariat to collate reports and accounts from district projects, and to prepare reporting for discussion in the Steering Committee and for forwarding to the national level. The Secretariat will also liaise with the capacity building and learning activities within the project and ensure that learning feedback is reaching provincial and national levels.

At District level and Commune level, the respective PC's are responsible for the *Chia Se* operations. At both levels a Project Management Unit (PMU) will be set up responsible for facilitating and supporting local planning, management and monitoring of poverty alleviation activities, and for accounting for the resources allocated to the district and communes. The DPMU will be divided into two sections, a Financial and Programme Management and Monitoring Section and a Capacity Building and Facilitation Section. The CPMU will report to the DPMU.

At Village level, the Village Meeting will be the main consultative and decision making body regarding planning, implementing and funding of poverty alleviation activities. For day-to-day management of activities the Village Meeting will select a Village Management Group that will be in charge of leading the local planning process, and for managing implementation, funds, and supervision and reporting. The Village Management

Group shall have a majority of female members. The Village Meeting can also elect a Supervisory Group to supervise implementation and resource management. The Village Meeting reports to the CPMU.

Programme Budget

The overall budget for the *Chia Se* programme is USD 43.5 million. The core budget available for implementing the programme is USD 41.5 million. An additional USD 2 million has been allocated to Sida programme follow-up activities. The programme will continue for a period of 5 years, starting fourth quarter 2003 and ending in 2008 with the finalisation of the last LDF cycle in some villages (Table 1). The total budget of USD 43.5 million will be capitalised by a planned Sida allocation of SEK 310 million (USD 37.5 million), and GoV counterpart funding of USD 5.8 million (15%). The main components are LDF - USD – 21.2 million (51%), local planning and management institutions building – USD 5.7 million (14%), capacity building – USD 7.5 million (18%) and Technical Assistance (TA) – USD 7,1 million (17%)[3].

Inception and piloting phase

Before full implementation is realised an inception and piloting phase of one year is envisaged, which will further develop – in close cooperation with the stakeholders – systems, structures, guidelines, workplans and the final logframe. An independent assessment of programme performance will take place towards the end of the inception and piloting phase, advising decision making on continuation of the programme. Specific benchmarks have been set that need to be achieved during the inception and piloting phase, and that will serve a reference for the performance assessment:

- ❖ Preparation of workplans and budgets.
- ❖ Arrangement of a Project Implementation Manual including:
- Financial systems and procurement guidelines
- Procedure for the recruitment of seconded and contracted project staff, including a system for periodical performance reviews
- Procedures for internal and external auditing
- M&E/MIS and reporting systems and procedures
- Guidelines for LDF utilisation, including allocation criteria for LDF sharing between villages and communes
- LPMD systems and criteria for how a higher level will approve and coordinate lower level development plans and priority activities.
- Criteria for identification of poor households and vulnerable groups within the selected villages.

[3] Exchange eates applied: VND 15,900 and SEK 8.0 to 1 USD.

- ❖ Preparation of a baseline for poverty alleviation, improved living conditions and empowerment indicators to be able to assess the impact of the programme on objective and goal level.
- ❖ Establishment of a baseline/assessment of the needs of human resources development and capacity of the National and Provincial Secretariats, DPMUs and CPMUs and village management groups in areas that will participate in the piloting phase.
- ❖ Recruitment of the seconded and contracted staff to DPMUs and CPMUs and establishment of roles and procedures for salary and allowance following the EU norms.
- ❖ Conducting capacity building and pilot LDMP/LDF processes in the villages and communes that have participated in the planning process.
- ❖ Preparing for the 2004/2005 LPMD/LDF cycle.
- Select the next batch of communes and villages that will be included in the LPMD/LDF cycle (2004/2005 implementation).
- Start the 2004/2005 LPMD/LDF cycle in the newly selected communes and villages, in particular the capacity building activities and the preparations for the planning process.